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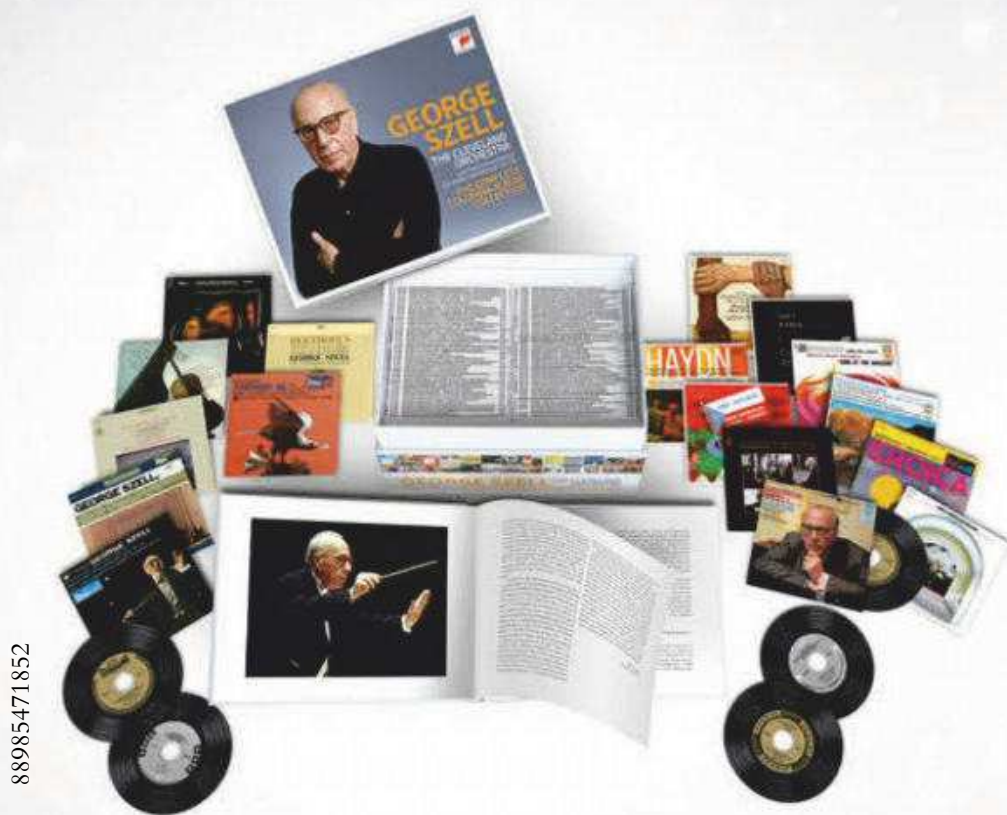
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ISOUNDS OF AMERICA

A special eight-page section focusing on recent recordings from the US and Canada

JS Bach

Cantatas - No 76, Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes; No 79, Gott der Herr ist Sonn und Schild; No 80 - Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott

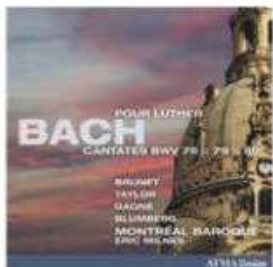
Hélène Brunet *sop* **Michael Taylor** *counterten*

Philippe Gagné *ten* **Jesse Blumberg** *bar*

Montreal Baroque / Eric Milnes

ATMA Classique © ACD2 2407 (70' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at the Église Saint-Augustin, Mirabel, QC, June 2016



Recorded live during the 2016 Montreal Baroque Festival, these colourful

performances of three Reformation cantatas capture the characteristic blend of joy and sophistication that makes music in Montreal so special. From the opening trumpet and oboe calls, varied in tone and texture from refined to rough, everything is focused on the authentic emotional content that lies beyond mere dazzling virtuosity.

Equally impressive, and quite a virtuoso feat in itself, is how versatile the four soloists are, that they can sing their recitatives and arias with such refinement of sound and intimacy of phrase and yet also form a choral force of not only poetry but weight, which works surprisingly well throughout, even in the massive opening chorus of Cantata No 79.

Although the countertenor Michael Taylor dominates the proceedings to some extent by the sheer seductive beauty of his approach, each of the quartet contributes strong, expressive singing and works hand-in-glove with the instrumental forces. Bach's exquisite ensembles of different configurations, especially those with solo oboe d'amore, viola d'amore and viola da gamba, are led by Eric Milnes so that balance and flow seem to regulate themselves. The concluding chorale of the first part of No 76, which is unforgettably magical, is just one of many moments of illumination, and, as always, supported by highly imaginative continuo work.

The recordings in the Église Saint-Augustin in Mirabel near the city's former international airport have the natural sense

GRAMOPHONE *talks to ...*

Rory Cowal

The pianist, equally at home in classical music and jazz, talks about his latest album, 'Clusters'

What inspired this programme?

In 2013 Amy Beal invited me to perform some of Johanna Beyer's solo piano works at the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC). Beal, a music historian, was shedding new light on this once-obscure composer and I was very excited to participate. A few years later, Amy invited me to perform at UCSC again, this time in a celebration of Daniel Goode's music. We realised that I had a number of really great pieces in my repertoire that had never been recorded, and we expanded this to a CD-length programme.

Can one discern an American style?

The album includes many different styles and flavours. Often, an attempt to specify an 'American' style involves drawing a line connecting certain composers and excluding others. Instead of a line, I think American music is better represented as a wide field



that includes a variety of composers bringing different experiences and perspectives.

Do some works particularly stand out for their originality?

I see originality as a common thread running right through the album. Each piece is its own musical inquiry, written with a sense of openness and discovery. As a performer and a listener, I am drawn to this sort of music.

What's next?

Two of the composers on this album - Muhal Richard Abrams and Kris Davis - are also master improvisers and draw from an avant-garde jazz tradition. I am assembling a programme of music by such composers.

of space that has long characterised the work of ATMA, whether it is this eighth volume in their projected complete cycle of Bach's sacred cantatas or Yannick Nézet-Séguin's Bruckner cycle with his hometown Orchestre Métropolitain. **Laurence Vittes**

McEncroe

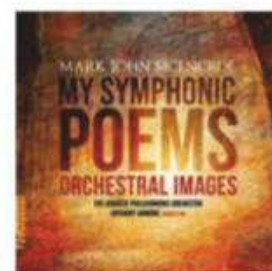
'My Symphonic Poems - Orchestral Images'

A Celebration of the Natural World. An Early Autumn Morning. Deep in the Wilderness. Echoes from a Haunted Past. Mid Autumn's Deep Colours. Movements in the Night. A Pageant at the Country Fair. The Passing. Summer's Last Hurrah. That Old Indian Summer (all orch Saliba)

Janáček Philharmonic Orchestra /

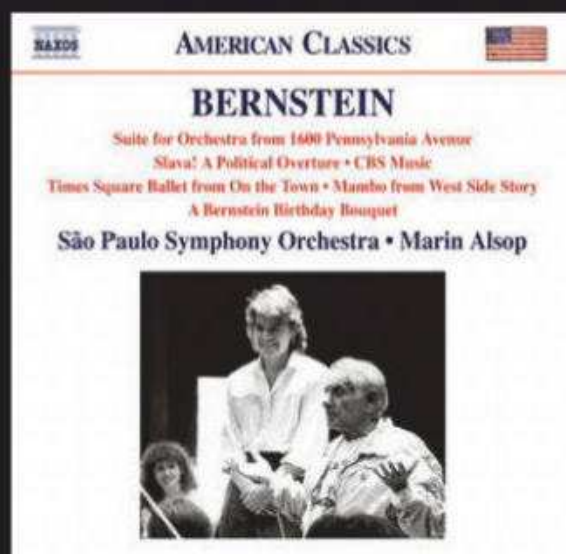
Anthony Armore

Navona © ② NV6189 (107' • DDD)



'I'm not an academically trained composer/musician', writes Mark John

McEncroe in this new Navona two-disc set (the fourth devoted to his music), and 'as such it's never been my aim to further the theoretical, intellectual or technical boundaries of music.' That much is certain from even the most casual acquaintance with the 10 orchestral works - five per disc - collected here, all played with commendable enthusiasm by the Janáček Philharmonic Orchestra under Anthony Armore. Born in Australia, McEncroe



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- THE TIMES



BIS RECORDS • BIS-2291 • 7318599922900 • AVAILABLE 10.05.18



Stellar soloist: Tamar Mikeladze is the pianist on an appealing disc of chamber music by George Oakley

has had a varied career, including label manager (for EMI) and professional chef, but composition appears to be his main occupation now.

'My Symphonic Poems – Orchestral Images' is the album's title and the latter part best describes what their composer himself calls 'musical paintings'. There is little genuinely symphonic development in any of them; they are tone poems (none the worse for that), symphonic only in the American sense of being written for a symphony orchestra. (So far as I can determine, all the orchestrations are by the Australian-born, Croatian-resident Mark J Saliba.) The most effective is *That Old Indian Summer*, whose charming, brief musical discourse matches the quirky title.

Sadly, this is the exception. Too often, unsupported melodic lines with rudimentary harmonisation amble aimlessly with little sense of musical progression. Havergal Brian's works are sometimes castigated as being rhythmically turgid – this isn't true, but in comparison to McEncroe's they are the height of pulsating syncopation! This is especially acute in the longer pieces – *A Celebration of the Natural World* and *An Early Autumn Morning*, which wend their enervating way for 17 and 21 minutes respectively – but is also apparent in the shorter pieces, such as *A Pageant at the Country Fair* (which,

if describing an actual event, must have been excruciatingly dull) or *Echoes from a Haunted Past*. Not a collection I shall return to. **Guy Rickards**

Oakley

'Wanderer: Chamber Works'

Cello Sonata^a. Four Songs on Shakespeare Sonnets^b. Remembrance^c. Sonata-Fantasia^d. Toccata^e

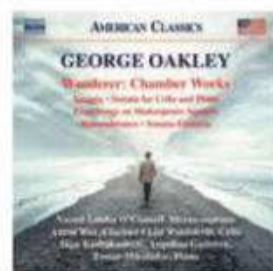
^bNaomi Louisa O'Connell *mez* ^cAnton Rist *cl*

^aLizi Ramishvili *vc* ^{abe}Inga Kashakashvili,

^cAngelina Gadeliya, ^dTamar Mikeladze *pfs*

Naxos American Classics (M) 8 559856

(72' • DDD • T)



The Georgian-American composer George Oakley

writes in an appealing and colourful style that blends elements of his Georgian folk heritage with European and American traditions. Wisps of Prokofiev can be discerned in several of the chamber works on this new disc, but so can ardent and propulsive music that sounds like the product of an original and fertile mind.

The writing for piano in all of these pieces sends signals about the composer's own award-winning keyboard abilities, especially in the opening *Toccata* (2008),

with its darting figures full of jazz character, and the closing *Sonata-Fantasia* (2010), a generous score that brings together all sorts of fierce and ruminative ideas. Inga Kashakashvili in the former and Tamar Mikeladze in the latter are stellar soloists.

Another bountiful work is the Sonata for cello and piano (2013), whose three movements give both players – here the superb cellist Lizi Ramishvili with Kashakashvili – many opportunities to head in poetic and vivacious directions. Oakley's versatility in tapping into expressive possibilities is also evident in *Remembrance*, a one-movement piece in three sections ('Daydream' – 'Dream' – 'Awakening') of luminous conversations for clarinet and piano; the vibrant musicians are Anton Rist, clarinet, and Angelina Gadeliya, piano.

That Oakley is thoroughly versed in styles of many eras, as well as pianistic means, can be heard in *Four Songs on Shakespeare Sonnets* (2011), which simulates Renaissance music through the prism of contemporary sensibility. The piano part at times is so alive that Shakespeare's words often fade into the background; but the songs, as performed by mezzo-soprano Naomi Louisa O'Connell and Kashakashvili, are affecting bursts of emotion.

Donald Rosenberg

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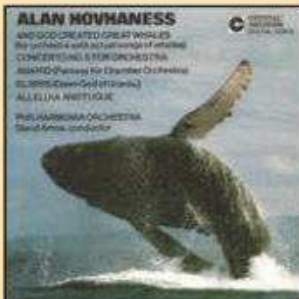
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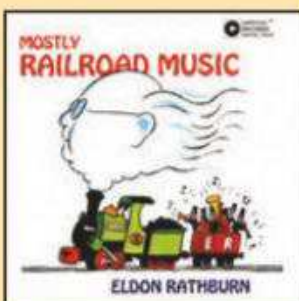


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'Clusters'

'American Piano Explorations'

Abrams Études, Op 1 No 1 **Beyer** Clusters **K Davis** Eight Pieces for the Vernal Equinox **Goode** Piano Sonata No 1 **D Mahler** 'a song that will linger'.

Martin Bartlett at the Claremont Hotel **Peterson** Reflection **Tenney** Variations in A (on a Theme by my Father)

Rory Cowal *pf*

New World © 80800-2 (56' • DDD)



Rory Cowal opens this recital with Johanna Beyer's multi-movement

Clusters, a riveting and attention-grabbing work that ought to be a repertoire staple. Beyer (1888-1944) may have been inspired by her friend and mentor Henry Cowell to compose with tone clusters, yet she uses them with a purposeful rigour, textural refinement and terse expressive agenda that differs from Cowell's decorative exuberance.

Given the late Muhal Richard Abrams's freewheeling and complex piano improvisations, The Op 1 No 1 *Études* sounds surprisingly academic and rhythmically unadventurous, despite Cowal's vividly detailed performance. Hundreds of American composers in the mid-20th century wrote piano pieces that amounted to little more than faux Schoenberg, such as Thomas Peterson's *Reflection*.

The component parts of Kris Davis's fluently structured *Eight Pieces for the Vernal Equinox* are easy for the ear to grasp and yield pleasant results, if no surprises. James Tenney's early Variations might be described as Roy Harris meets Stefan Wolpe, and offers tangible proof that he had real talent before he threw it all away and became an experimental idol who specialised in interminable slow-moving soundscapes. But Daniel Goode's early Piano Sonata No 1 makes a fresh and original impression. It unfolds in unison lines that never resolve where you expect them to and are subject to effective yet unpredictable embellishment. While the music is admittedly disjunctive, it nevertheless holds interest, even the extended ending that looks to Hindemith and Copland for mild assistance.

Finally, David Mahler's six-movement suite dedicated to the late composer Martin Bartlett is a model of how to convey intensity and reserve in judicial doses. For example, the aching simplicity of 'Beloved'

is moving without ever spilling over into mawkishness. The spaces in between the arpeggiated phrases of 'Be Still' are as telling as the phrases themselves. The jagged unison bass-register runs of 'Ghost Soliloquy' emit and save energy at the same time, while the final movement's tone clusters are wonderfully resonant yet discreetly deployed and never muddy. Mahler's 'a song that will linger' is a loose transcription of Stephen Foster's song 'Hard Times', where the piano-writing grows more dissonant and asymmetrical as the music progresses, yet always maintains palpable tension and release. Cowal makes a compelling case for everything he plays, although I suspect I'll mainly return to the Beyer, Goode and Mahler selections.

Jed Distler

'Frolov & Friends'

Frolov Amiran Waltz. Caprice. Dansa latina.

Impromptu Waltz. Piece in Blues Style.

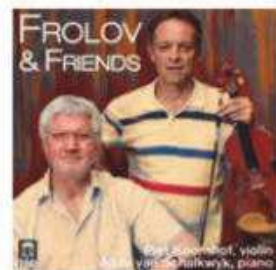
Romance. Scherzo **Anckermann** Cuban Piece

Bosque Six Melodies **Gais** Swedish Farewell

Waltz **Gershwin** Summertime **Prats** Maria's Place (all arr Frolov)

Piet Koornhof *vn* **Albie van Schalkwyk** *pf*

Delos © DE3557 (63' • DDD)



Igor Frolov (b1937, not to be confused with the Moscow-based cyclist of the same name, b1990!) enjoyed an international concert career (he was a pupil of Oistrakh, among others) and, having won prizes in several competitions, served on the juries of several others, including the Tchaikovsky. Although not trained in composition, he took to writing small pieces and arranging others to play in his recitals, often as encores. As Piet Koornhof's booklet note points out, the irony of Frolov's compositions – particularly those written during his trips to Cuba, or inspired by them – is their dalliances with jazz and other popular musical forms that were, at the time, banned in his homeland.

A fine example of his use of popular forms is the *Piece in Blues Style*, quite the finest and most individual work on this disc. Its quiet and relaxed character catches the feel of the idiom beautifully. *Dansa latina* is almost as appealing, a vivid and lively dance in marked contrast to the rather bland and schmaltzy sequence of romances, waltzes and caprices. The *Six Melodies* are a suite of arrangements of

tunes by General Juan Almeida Bosque, a one-time Cuban freedom fighter and confidant of Castro. Idiomatic as the arrangements are, their musical qualities are far from revolutionary.

The arrangement of Gershwin's 'Summertime' (Frolov also wrote a *Concert Fantasy on Themes from Porgy and Bess*) is taken a touch too slowly here for my taste. (Indeed, Koornhof and van Schalkwyk are expansive in many of their tempo choices, even in the *Piece in Blues Style*, although it works fine there.) The transcriptions of songs by Jorge Anckermann and Rodrigo Prats are pleasing enough, based on Cuban songs; Serge Gais's *Swedish Farewell Waltz* was based on a whimsical improvisation by Frolov himself. **Guy Rickards**

'Grand Russian'

Rachmaninov Piano Sonata No 1, Op 28

Tchaikovsky Grande Sonate, Op 37

Albert Tiu *pf*

Centaur © CRC3661 (71' • DDD)



The best performances of Tchaikovsky's sometimes rambling and pianistically unwieldy G major Sonata project the music in symphonic terms, with straightforward tempos that make interpretative points through phrasing, colour and nuance. Albert Tiu gets extra mileage out of the first movement's primarily chordal textures by making subtle variations in balance and emphasis when material is reiterated. That said, his forthright and honest performance doesn't match the more fluid and transparent mastery of the old Sviatoslav Richter and Grigory Ginzburg recordings: an unfair observation, perhaps, but the comparisons speak for themselves.

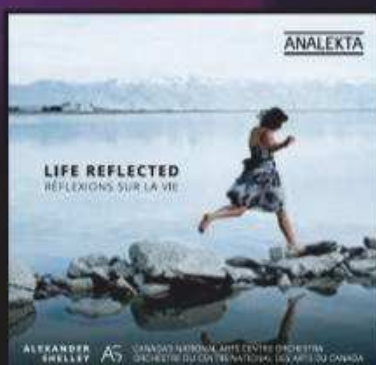
Although Tiu's sensitive and conscientious rendition of the second movement lacks Vassily Primakov's dynamic scope and harmonic tension, he still imparts character and variety to the music's varying moods, with an extra kick to the obsessive, Schumann-like dotted rhythms. By contrast, Tiu's lackadaisical Scherzo barely suggests a true *giocoso*, and pales next to Joseph Moog's faster and suppler traversal. He imparts plenty of energy and momentum throughout the finale, with little help from the sustain pedal, yet one misses Freddy Kempf's precipitous and balletic audacity.

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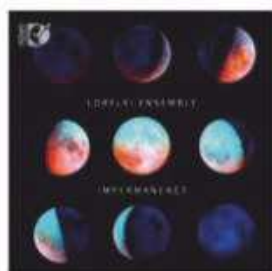
Stunning precision and emotional intensity: the Lorelei Ensemble present an imaginative programme spanning Dufay to Takemitsu

Tiu's sonority and sense of line considerably open up for the Rachmaninov First Sonata's mammoth of a first movement. You notice this about a minute and a half into the opening section's first climax, where the right hand's big chords and swirling left-hand figurations press ahead, yet still make room for the inner voices to soar. Moreover, the pianist confidently grasps the composer's dauntingly full-bodied keyboard-writing without the slightest vagary of accommodation. He may not pin you to the wall with Alexis Weissenberg's pulverisingly demonic authority, but who can? In the gorgeous *Lento*, though, Tiu works too hard emphasising local details and accents, which often throws the music's carefully crafted melody/accompaniment perspective askew, together with his never really establishing a steady pulse at the outset. In this regard, I much prefer the shapelier simplicity and directness of Santiago Rodriguez's recording (Élan). Despite his alluring moulding of lyrical passages, Tiu's heavy and rhythmically square handling of the finale's relentlessly churning triplet figurations grows tiresome over time, without the orchestral sweep and tonal richness that send me time and again to Sergio Fiorentino's stunning recording. While Tiu unquestionably has the capacity for big piano-playing, he faces steep catalogue competition. **Jed Distler**

Rachmaninov – selected comparison:
Fiorentino (6/12) (PLAN) PCLM0033
Tchaikovsky – selected comparisons:
Moog (A/14) (ONYX) ONYX4126
Kempf (3/16) (BIS) BIS2140
Primakov (BRID) BRIDGE9283

'Impermanence'

Anonymous Par grant soif clere fontaine/Dame de tout pris (Turin Codex). Portum in ultimo (Codex Calixtinus). Pour ce que point fu de la amere espine/A toi vierge me represente (Turin Codex). Qui patris atris honoris/Paraclite spiritus (Turin Codex). Sanctus in eternis regnans/Sanctus et ingenitus pater atque carens (Turin Codex) **Dufay** Apostolo glorioso. Flos florum. O proles Hispaniae/O sidus Hispaniae. Rite maiorem Jacobum canamus/Arcibus summis miseri recluse **P Gilbert** Tsukimi – excs **Takemitsu** Windhorse – Vocalises I & II **Lorelei Ensemble / Beth Willer**
 Sono Luminus ® (CD + DSL92226 (48' • DDD, DTS-HD MA5.1, 9.1 Auro-3D & 9.1 Dolby Atmos • T/t)



a stunning precision of harmony and intonation, and often spectacular virtuosity in music that has accompanied and reflected 'our changing cultures, beliefs, and

histories' – from a 12th-century songbook used by pilgrims travelling along the Camino de Santiago in northern Spain, via Peter Gilbert's eight short exquisite movements, to Japanese poems celebrating the full moon, and in audiophile sound no less.

Guillaume Dufay dominates an imaginative programme. Working from Alejandro Planchart's new *Opera omnia* edition at the University of Oxford, artistic director Beth Willer and Lorelei respond to four motets with the radiance of liberated joy, like unlocking the secrets to ancient charms: the strange ecstasy of *O proles Hispanie* or their appropriately glorious *Apostolo glorioso*.

Then there is the hypnotic intricacy of excerpts from the 15th-century Turin Codex, with a curiously sing-song *Sanctus in eternis regnans* and a warmth of humanity in *Pour ce que point*. There is an emotional intensity to everything Lorelei sing; even the two meandering Vocalises from Takemitsu's *Windhorse* – depicting Tibetan nomads and otherwise incongruously inconsequential – tug at the heart with tender folk-song memories.

The sound has wonderful spatial dimensions and an airy quality. Beth Willer's invaluable booklet notes are academically focused yet absorbing all the same for the context they set and the philosophical depths they suggest.

Laurence Vittes

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Looking back over a fine year in music

What defined your 2018 in music? Most years, the classical community coalesces around one particular anniversary, and for 2018 that felt very much like

Leonard Bernstein's centenary. I've written before how the art of anniversaries is to make people think differently about their subject. In Bernstein's case, I suspect it was less that perceptions of this remarkable man were changed, but that awareness of the multifaceted nature of his extraordinary life was greatly enhanced, or certainly reinforced. Among other things, the year gave rise to a particularly impressive set of his symphonies from Warner Classics under the masterful command of Sir Antonio Pappano.

Oddly perhaps, Rossini – who died 150 years ago – didn't quite get the attention we might have expected. Perhaps advocacy of those composers whose masterpieces lie in opera or large choral music is simply tougher to achieve logistically. In any case, we felt dedicating our final issue of the year to Rossini was a worthwhile thing to do, and the renowned Rossinian Richard Osborne helps us get closer to his music and his legacy.

Another major anniversary was the centenary of Debussy's death, and perhaps one of the most inspired series of 2018 came from our Label of the Year, Harmonia Mundi, which invited its formidable family of artists to present their personal visions of the composer. The series's ninth and final release sees François-Xavier Roth – an Award-winner this year for his Ravel – offer an exquisitely performed recording of *Jeux* and *Nocturnes*. But it was often in the unexpected

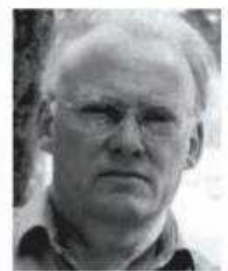


that this series fascinated most: last month's recordings of Debussy's Late Works drew our attention movingly to Debussy's touchingly reflective final pieces, mirroring his anguish as his life and the world around him fell apart. Another highlight – and another Editor's Choice – was the beautiful collection of songs by Sophie Karthäuser and Stéphane Dugout, 'Harmonie du Soir', which took us back to when Debussy's art was awash more with poetry than poignancy. Showing such trust and open-minded support of artists is perhaps where record companies today really excel. As ease of access to music offers us more choice than ever before, such an approach may yet yield the most distinctive albums of future years.

Finally, in a neat coincidence, *Gramophone's* year is bookended by two thrilling releases from one of today's most hotly debated maestros, Teodor Currentzis. His exceptionally vivid recording of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* was Recording of the Month in January, and this month sees an equally up-close and compelling recording of Mahler's Sixth Symphony. Yes, he divides opinion – but given that one of art's aims is to make us think deeply and differently, I would say that's no bad thing. Personally, I was completely gripped from the first notes of both albums. Not surprisingly, Currentzis cropped up twice in our annual Critics' Choice feature, in which our reviewers name their highlights of 2018. I hope you'll sample some of their recommendations over the coming festive weeks. Whatever you listen to, may I wish you all a very happy – and music-filled – Christmas.

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



RICHARD OSBORNE was delighted to write about Rossini for both our cover feature and Collection:

'I have worked on the composer for over 40 years,' he says. The 2007 edition of his *Master Musicians* Rossini is widely acknowledged to be the standard work on the composer.



'It was fascinating to watch François-Xavier Roth conduct Debussy's *Nocturnes* twice, just days apart, in

London and Paris with such different orchestras,' recalls **MARK PULLINGER**, who interviews the conductor this issue. 'It was revealing to delve into his approach to music-making.'



'Blue Heron's *Gramophone* Award-winning "Music from the Peterhouse Partbooks, Vol 5" disc was the

discovery of my reviewing year for 2017,' says **FABRICE FITCH**, author of our feature on the ensemble, 'so getting the chance to know them better has been a real treat.'

Gramophone, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts, which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is *the* magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.

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WIGMORE HALL

Classical Concerts this December



Tuesday 11 December 2018 7.30pm

La Nuova Musica; **David Bates** director; **Lucy Crowe** soprano
Vivaldi, Corelli and Handel

Friday 21 December 2018 7.30pm

Alice Coote mezzo-soprano; **Christian Blackshaw** piano
Haydn, Tchaikovsky, Schubert, Brahms and Mahler

Saturday 22 December 2018 7.30pm

Avi Avital mandolin; **Venice Baroque Orchestra**
Geminiani, Vivaldi and Paisiello



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GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews

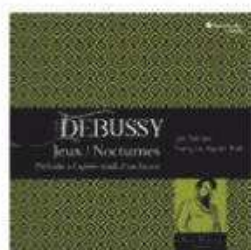


RECORDING OF THE MONTH



HANDEL
'Italian Cantatas'
Sabine Devielhe *sop*
Lea Desandre *mez*
Le Concert d'Astrée /
Emmanuelle Haïm
Erato
► **RICHARD WIGMORE'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 54**

This Handel recording offers some incredibly stylish singing, with music-making that, under Emmanuelle Haïm's excellent direction, has throughout a compelling theatricality.



DEBUSSY
Orchestral Works
Les Siècles /
François-Xavier Roth
Harmonia Mundi
A superb addition to

Harmonia Mundi's fascinating Debussy survey, François-Xavier Roth and his period instrument players capturing the music's beauty and mystery.

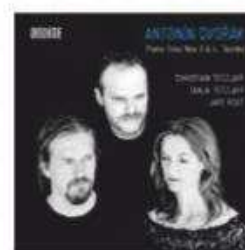
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 61**



MAHLER
Symphony No 6
MusicAeterna /
Teodor Currentzis
Sony Classical
Few conductors of

late have generated such debate as Teodor Currentzis – his extraordinarily vivid approach to recording is just as thrilling here as in his recent *Pathétique*.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 64**



DVOŘÁK
Piano Trios Nos 3 & 4
Christian Tetzlaff *vn* **Tanja Tetzlaff** *vc* **Lars Vogt** *pf*
Ondine

An exquisite and entrancing chamber music disc, and an impressive example of the intimacy and interplay that the genre can embody at its most heightened.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 79**



MESSIAEN
La Nativité du Seigneur
Richard Gowers *org*
King's College, Cambridge
From the work's quiet beginnings through to

the magnificent and magisterial final part, this is deeply impressive organ-playing, with Kings College's atmospheric sound expertly captured.

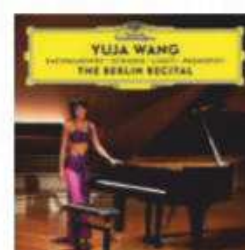
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 91**



'BACH INSPIRATIONS'
Thibaut Garcia *gtr*
Erato
Guitarist Thibaut Garcia's instinctive-sounding command of

colour and his graceful virtuosity offer an album at times moving and reflective, at others dramatic, all played with admirable skill and delicacy.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 94**



'THE BERLIN RECITAL'
Yuja Wang *pf*
DG
Yuja Wang is one of the most impressive pianists of her

generation – extraordinary technique allied with imaginative musicality, she makes her second appearance on this page in as many months.

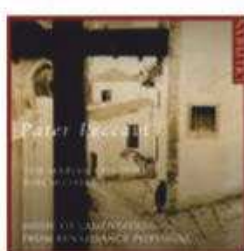
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 94**



ELGAR
The Music Makers.
The Spirit of England
BBC Symphony Orchestra
/ **Sir Andrew Davis**
Chandos

With artists, and a record label in Chandos, all so steeped in repertoire such as this, it's no surprise that this album should be so powerful and so moving.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 101**



'PATER PECCAVI'
The Marian Consort /
Rory McCleery
Delphian
Profiled by us earlier in the year, The

Marian Consort under Rory McCleery bring the exquisite skill and elegance for which they've already become known to the music of late-Renaissance Portugal.

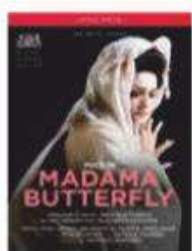
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 112**



SAINT-SAËNS Ascanio
Sols; Orchestra of the Geneva University of Music /
Guillaume Tourniaire
B Records

There's a real sense of delight in discovery as these musicians – players, chorus and soloists all excellent throughout – bring us this Saint-Saëns rarity.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 120**



DVD/BLU-RAY
PUCCINI *Madama Butterfly*
Sols; Royal Opera / **Sir Antonio Pappano**
Opus Arte

Mark Pullinger was deeply moved by this production, both in the opera house and now on screen, featuring the excellent Ermonela Jaho in the title role and one of today's leading Puccini conductors in the pit.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 119**



REISSUE/ARCHIVE
WILHELM BACKHAUS
HMW Recordings 1925-1937
Wilhelm Backhaus *pf*
APR

A chance to revel in the virtuosity of the young Wilhelm Backhaus, including the first complete Chopin *Études*.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 89**

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FOR THE RECORD

DG celebrates 120 years with a lavish box-set

Deutsche Grammophon is marking its 120th birthday with a box-set comprising – appropriately – 120 CDs. Tracing the history of the company, it sheds a chronological light on a developing industry. Founded in June 1898 in Hanover, its directors were Emile Berliner – inventor of both the disc and the player – and his brother Joseph. Soon Berliner's disc had replaced Edison's cylinder as the industry standard. (By the time of Joseph Berliner's death in 1928 and Emile's the following year, DG's annual production has reached nearly 10 million records, with the Hanover factory employing some 600 people.)

DG's history has many milestones, including the introduction in 1950 of the variable groove 78rpm disc (which allowed up to nine minutes of music per side), the first LP (1951), the introduction of the famous yellow cartouche (1957), the first stereo recording (1962 – Karajan's epoch-making Beethoven symphony cycle), the first digital recording (1979 – Gidon Kremer playing the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto with



Lorin Maazel and the BPO) and the first mass-produced Compact Disc (1982 – Karajan's Berlin *Eine Alpensinfonie*).

From DG's early days, many major names in 20th-century music appear including recordings by Nikisch, Hertz, Erich Kleiber, Klemperer, Richard Strauss, Pfitzner, de Sabata, Furtwängler and Horenstein. The galaxy of later star players is well conveyed in the set, too – among the 17 discs of piano music are recordings by Kempff, Michelangeli, Pollini, Barenboim, Argerich, Pogorelich, Horowitz, Lang Lang, Trifonov, Perahia and Sokolov.

Called '120 Years of Deutsche Grammophon', the set weighs in at

5.4kg and costs about £260, including a 200-page book divided into 16 chapters which look at different aspects of the DG story, past, present and future (a bonus CD gives a taster of releases to come), as well as the various genres recorded. Also included is a Blu-ray Audio disc of Karajan's recording of Wagner's *The Ring*. The set is available to download by volume as well as to stream, and there is also a related 'DG 120' playlist of 120 tracks to stream on Spotify and Apple Music.



New Music Director at St Thomas New York

Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue, New York, has named its new Music Director as Jeremy Filsell. In October he will succeed Daniel Hyde, who in turn succeeded the equally illustrious John Scott following the latter's death in 2015, and who returns to the UK to take over as Music Director at King's College Chapel. That the three most recent incumbents are English organists is perhaps not coincidental – Saint Thomas, an Episcopalian church with

its choir of men and boy choristers (drawn from a residential choir school), is felt to be very much in the Anglican choral tradition. Filsell is currently Director of Music at the Episcopal Church of St Alban in Washington DC, an artist-in-residence at Washington National Cathedral, and professor of organ at the Peabody Conservatory. His discography includes the premiere recordings of Marcel Dupré's complete organ works, described by *Gramophone* as 'one of the greatest achievements in organ recording'.

Said Filsell: 'I am delighted and humbled to be asked to take up the musical reins at Saint Thomas and to follow in the footsteps of some remarkable recent musicians.'

Ben Glassberg takes Glyndebourne on tour

Glyndebourne On Tour has appointed Ben Glassberg as its Principal Conductor. The post's previous occupants suggest it's an appointment that can lead to great things: Glassberg follows on from Edward Gardner, Jakub Hrůša and Robin Ticciati (Ticciati having been subsequently appointed Music Director of the main festival itself). Glyndebourne On Tour – which marks its 50th anniversary next

year – takes several Glyndebourne operas to cities throughout the UK, often showcasing young talent. Glassberg will conduct one per year for the next three years.

'I'm incredibly excited to be continuing my relationship with Glyndebourne,' said Glassberg. 'My first professional work as an assistant was at Glyndebourne, and it's where many memorable and joyous moments in my career so far have taken place.'

Sarah Mohr-Pietsch named Dartington's new Artistic Director

Sara Mohr-Pietsch, the Radio 3 broadcaster who presented the Breakfast Show for several years, has been named Artistic Director of Dartington Summer School and Festival. She takes over from pianist Joanna MacGregor, who curates her fifth and final festival next year.

Recalling her own time as a student at Dartington, Mohr-Pietsch said: 'The warmth and creativity I encountered ... had a powerful effect on me, and I am excited about creating transformative musical experiences for everyone, as well as deepening connections with the local community.'

Pappano to stay on at Covent Garden

London's Royal Opera House has confirmed that Sir Antonio Pappano will remain as Music Director until at least the end of the 2022/23 season.

Pappano took up the post in 2002, and since then his leadership of the house has been widely acclaimed, both live and through subsequent releases – *Gramophone* Awards were given to DVDs of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* (2008), Verdi's *Don Carlo* (2011) and Puccini's *Il trittico* (2013). By the end of this

season, he will have passed the milestone of Covent Garden's longest-serving Music Director.

'This place feels like my home', said Pappano, 'and I am so excited to continue my artistic journey here, conducting the repertory that [Director of Opera] Oliver Mears and I have developed together while



Sir Antonio Pappano: staying on at Covent Garden until at least 2023

continuing my collaboration with the finest orchestra and chorus in the world.'

He also announced plans for a sabbatical year in the 2020/21 season, during which he will conduct at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, La Scala in Milan and the Staatsoper in Berlin.

ONE TO WATCH

Elsa Dreisig Soprano

The enormous potential of Franco-Danish soprano Elsa Dreisig was confirmed when she won Plácido Domingo's Operalia Competition in 2016. Dreisig was a member of the opera studio of Berlin Staatsoper from 2015, under the artistic direction of Daniel Barenboim, and following her Operalia success she became a company member, undertaking leading roles including Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*) and Violetta (*La traviata*) to widespread acclaim.

Dreisig has now signed exclusively to Erato. Her debut album, reviewed in this issue (see page 125), presents mirror images of the same operatic heroines, as revealed by different composers, and displays her versatility from light coloratura to Straussian heft. It also suggests an exploratory zeal that should find a natural home at Erato: the two *Roméo et Juliette* settings are first recordings (one from Steibelt's opera, the other from the original version by Gounod). Our impressed critic Mark Pullinger describes the overall album as a debut 'full of promise'.

In addition, Dreisig also appears on two tracks of the Bach-inspired guitar album of her fellow Erato artist Thibaut Garcia



(see review on page 94). Dreisig was keen to highlight the advantages of working with such a supportive label, and for being given the 'freedom to explore, experiment and take risks'. With Erato's record of developing young talent over the long term, Dreisig is surely in safe hands. We look forward to further results of this collaboration.

GRAMOPHONE Online

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Podcasts

Gramophone's podcast series continues with three engrossing new episodes. The first is dedicated to the great Swedish soprano Birgit Nilsson. In Stockholm, James Jolly meets with the President of the Birgit Nilsson Foundation, Rutbert Reisch, and talks to him about the singer and her extraordinary career as documented on her live recordings.



Talking Mozart, Weber and jazz: clarinetist Julian Bliss

In the second episode, Julian Bliss (pictured) talks to Martin Cullingford about his new recording on Signum Classics of the Mozart and Weber Clarinet Quintets with the Carducci String Quartet. He also discusses his love of jazz, and about the enjoyment of helping design a new clarinet.

In a further episode, James Jolly talks to violinist Nikolaj Znaider about Mozart and the Carl Nielsen International Competition.

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ARTISTS & *their* INSTRUMENTS

Christian Tetzlaff on his Peter Greiner violin



“I met the German violin-maker Peter Greiner about 27 years ago. At the time, I had just been given a nice Stradivarius to play by a private supporter, who said I could play it for as long as I wanted. Peter made a copy of it and, being a bit young and cheeky, when I had both those instruments I started playing on Peter’s instead of the Stradivarius. You might have expected this person who had so generously let me play his Stradivarius to have been furious and say ‘OK, give me back my instrument’, but instead this generous man asked Peter to build him a whole string quartet! In retrospect,

I don’t know whether or not I could have tried more with the Stradivarius to make it an instrument that suited me, but I think I was just drawn to this idea that, nowadays, there’s no reason why a genius maker cannot build a beautiful fiddle. Stradivarius was famous right away, he didn’t have to wait 200 years.

I think that what you find as weaknesses in modern violins, you find interesting in old ones – the same sound you would criticise in a modern fiddle would amaze you in an old fiddle. There is also the Darwinian aspect, that the really bad old fiddles are not played,

so natural selection over hundreds of years means that, compared to a modern instrument, there’s a much higher chance of an old instrument being good. But – and now comes the big but – in any blind test between old and modern instruments, where the test is done in a really good way – spraying the instruments so you cannot smell which is old and new, blindfolding players and audiences, etc – the results are totally arbitrary.

Peter Greiner is a player, and he does what he says Stradivarius also did – he plays the fiddles when they are white, when you can still sandpaper everywhere and change things. Then, once he thinks the basic set-up of the fiddle gives best credit to what the wood can do, he varnishes – because one’s methods of influence diminish once everything is varnished.

I’ve used several of Peter’s instruments. One I played for 12 years, and the one I play now I’ve played for six or seven years. I just grabbed it after someone else had tried it out and hadn’t liked it. I played a few notes on it, and then I think I played a concert on it the next day! I knew right away that this violin was something unusual, even among Peter’s instruments. I’m still discovering things about it and am continuing to work a bit on different strings – I’m still intrigued enough by it to continue playing it.

If someone gave me a Stradivarius that sounded better than my Peter Greiner I would of course immediately play it, because I need the best possible sound. What I’m trying to say is that I’m not playing a modern instrument because I want to promote the cause of modern instruments – I just want to choose the most rewarding instrument.”

Christian Tetzlaff’s recording of Dvořák’s Piano Trios Nos 3 and 4 with Tanja Tetzlaff and Lars Vogt is reviewed on page 79

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GRAMOPHONE GUIDE TO ... *Sinfonia concertante*

David Threasher traces another form that reached its pinnacle with Mozart

The terms 'symphony' and 'concerto' have histories almost as long as Western art music itself and mean different things depending on the time and place of their application. 'Sinfonia concertante', on the other hand, refers to a particular type of piece, composed in a specific period – and, as so often, the usual suspects provided the works that represent the form at its finest.

At its most basic, it's a concerto for multiple instruments, which not only function as soloists but also to a greater or lesser extent embed themselves, symphonically, into the wider musical texture. The concerto grosso came closest to this description during the Baroque; with the rise of the Romantics, the terms 'double concerto' and 'triple concerto' became more common. The sinfonia concertante, then, enjoyed its vogue in the second half of the 18th century. It was popular in Paris where, as *symphonie concertante*, examples by the likes of Davaux, Devienne, Gossec and Pleyel were enjoyed by the soloists of the Concerts Spirituels. JC Bach composed a string of such works in London, for the virtuosos of the orchestra he convened for the Bach-Abel concerts. Mozart would have heard JCB's music as a child in the English capital, as well as further such works in Mannheim.

Mozart becomes one of those usual suspects for perhaps the finest work in the genre, his Sinfonia concertante for violin, viola and orchestra. Having emerged imperceptibly from the orchestra, the two soloists subsequently share material, intertwining with suavity in the opening *Allegro maestoso*, more light-heartedly in the final *Presto* and with utmost seriousness in the central slow movement. Set in grave C minor, this is a masterpiece of dazzling maturity from the 23-year-old, stepping confidently outside the accepted emotional bounds of the concerto of the 1770s.

Haydn's sole example was the result of a 1792 *querelle* that the London press confected between him and his erstwhile pupil Ignaz Pleyel. Haydn responded effortlessly to the challenge of the younger man's *concertanti* in a work of the most delightful charm for violin, cello, oboe and bassoon.

The rise of the double and triple concerto led to the demise of the concertante, although works such as Saint-Saëns's *Organ Symphony* or Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole* nevertheless display many of its traits. More recently, a similar compositional style pops up in works such as Szymanowski's Fourth Symphony, with its prominent piano part, Litolf's *Concertos symphoniques* and Prokofiev's cello Symphony-Concerto. But these are works of their own time, a far cry from the origins of the form in 18th-century Europe. **G**

► Listen to our Sinfonia concertante playlist on Qobuz



Vilde Frang and Lawrence Power perform Mozart's Sinfonia concertante

IN THE STUDIO

● Having amassed a substantial (and often *Gramophone* Award-winning) catalogue on Harmonia Mundi, the conductor **René Jacobs** is embarking on a complete Schubert symphony cycle on the Pentatone label, with the Belgian period ensemble B'Rock. It's the first time he's ever recorded music by the composer. Symphonies Nos 1 and 6 have just been released (and will be reviewed next month) and the cycle is due to be completed in 2021.

● **Christophe Rousset** and **Les Talens Lyriques** have completed their trilogy of operas by Antonio Salieri with *Tarare* (previous releases include *Les Danaïdes* and *Les Horaces*, recorded in 2016 and just released by Aparté). Recorded during performances at the Opéra Royal in Versailles, the cast included Cyrille Dubois, Karine Deshayes, Jean-Sébastien Bou and Judith van Wanroij. The opera sets the only libretto by Beaumarchais (whose *Marriage of Figaro* was famously adapted by Lorenzo da Ponte and Mozart). The release date has yet to be decided.

● **Jean-Efflam Bavouzet** continues his Mozart piano concerto cycle with the Manchester Camerata and Gábor Takács-Nagy for Chandos. Volume 4 comprises Nos 20 and 21 (K466 and 467), coupled with the Overture to *Don Giovanni*. Expect a summer 2019 release.

● In time for the 150th anniversary of the composer's death next year, **Sir Andrew Davis** and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra – whose Interim Artistic Director he is until Gustavo Gimeno's arrival at the start of the 2020 season – have recorded Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* and *Lélio*, his fantasy on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The Chandos sessions took place in September, the recording is due out mid-2019.

● **Christian Lindberg** – in the triple role of composer, soloist and conductor – has made a recording for BIS of his own works. Made in Antwerp with city's Symphony Orchestra the programme includes *Liverpool Lullabies* for trombone, percussion and orchestra, with guest soloist Evelyn Glennie.

ORCHESTRA *Insight ...*

The Hallé

Our monthly series telling the story behind an orchestra

Founded 1858

Home The Bridgewater Hall, Manchester

Music Director Sir Mark Elder

Founding Music Director Charles Hallé

Note the absence of the word 'orchestra'. The Hallé is more than that. It started life as a multifaceted concerts society and is currently a family comprising four choirs, two symphony orchestras and thousands of cheerleaders. If plans are approved, it might soon include a school. Improvement was at the heart of the institution Charles Hallé founded in hard-working Victorian Manchester. A century-and-a-half later, it's hard to think of anything other than football that expresses civic cohesion in this city quite like the Hallé does.

The Hallé's 'adult' symphony orchestra has been associated with 20th-century boom-and-bust, but its significance in British music life is hard to overstate. It introduced the world to Elgar's First Symphony, Mahler's *Das klagende Lied* and Thomas Adès's *These Premises are Alarmed*. It generated one of the greatest orchestra-conductor partnerships in history, when John Barbirolli inherited a band of 30 players from Hans Richter and created a delectable orchestra over 27 years. More recently, it kick-started a pan-European trend that suggests Wagner's *Ring* is the ultimate test for a symphony orchestra as much as for an opera company.

The Hallé's recent history pivots on the year 1996, when it moved from Manchester's dowdy Free Trade Hall to its industrial-chic Bridgewater Hall. It wasn't the honeymoon it should have been. The orchestra faced bankruptcy and its relationship with music director Kent Nagano bordered on the dysfunctional. Rehearsing Elgar as a guest conductor, Mark Elder encountered a bruised ensemble that gave him 'competence but not much more.' He sensed an opportunity, and was appointed music director from 2000.



Sir Mark Elder has been music director of the Hallé since 2000

Elder started by 'cleaning up' repertoire works, not least by the orchestra's beloved Elgar. By 2002 he was conducting chunks of Wagner operas and the next year launched the orchestra's in-house record label with the *Enigma* Variations. The label, a perfect complement to the orchestra's legacy recordings with Barbirolli, has given us four complete Wagner operas, world premieres and a wealth of underexposed British repertoire. It has embraced the choirs that were part of Charles Hallé's blueprint. One such release, of the 2014 annual Christmas concert, somehow communicates the idea of audiences, volunteer singers and professional instrumentalists staking equal ownership to a priceless tradition.

For all the affection, Manchester expects excellence. Elder and a string of associated conductors have honed it. The Hallé's sound retains a certain serrated edge that might be indigenous to the north of England. Add to that mellow nobility, operatic sensitivity and notable clarity

instilled by a conductor for whom elegance is all. **Andrew Mellor**

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London choral conductor winner



The German conductor Julia Selina Blank (pictured) received the first prize at the inaugural London International Choral Conducting Competition which took place at London's Royal Academy of Music in October and featured two host choirs, Chantage and Coro, as well as a guest choir,

cc Freia from Helsinki. Earlier this year Blank founded DAME to perform choral music for female voices on a professional level. She is also the conductor of Oslo's Asker Chamber Choir and Norske Kammersangere.

BBC launches new Sounds app

The BBC has launched a new app, which draws together its music, podcast and radio content, including Radio 3. The app will configure itself to each user's tastes, learning from their listening habits and providing relevant content, including many new and returning

podcasts, and music mixes - those focusing on classical repertoire will include Classical Focus from BBC Bitesize ('a carefully curated backdrop of classical music to concentrate to') and Classical Sunrise from Radio 3 ('a selection of classical music to ease you into the weekend').

This month's music on medici.tv

Maintaining this month's Rossini theme, we've a sparkling production of *La pietra del paragone* conducted by Rossini expert Alberto Zedda from Madrid and a concert with Cecilia Bartoli from Barcelona's gorgeous Palau de la Música Catalana. Catch Daniel Barenboim and his West-Eastern Divan Orchestra on a recent tour in the US. At Carnegie Hall, in a concert in memory of Isaac Stern, they play Richard Strauss's *Don Quixote* (with the young DG-signed cellist Kian Soltani) and Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony. With Lang Lang back giving concerts and focusing on the music of Mozart, try a documentary with him and Nikolaus Harnoncourt, 'Mission Mozart'. And for a masterclass, Michael Tilson Thomas explores Brahms's Second Symphony with students. For these and more visit **medici.tv** and search 'Gramophone selects'.

FROM WHERE I SIT

Why is *Porgy and Bess* so rarely performed as the Gershwins intended, asks Edward Seckerson




The recent revival of the Gershwins' *Porgy and Bess* at English National Opera has prompted me to look a little deeper into this landmark score and to reassess its significance in the chronology of American music theatre. Along with *West Side Story* it remains the score that the great and the good of the genre wish they had written. There is a stratospheric level of ambition about *Porgy and Bess*, an urgent need to push the American musical, opera, call it what you will, to new heights, to reconcile an indigenous folksiness to high sophistication.

Stephen Sondheim cites the lyric of its opening number – the bluesily pentatonic 'Summertime' (a melody it has been suggested is redolent, too, of a Ukrainian Yiddish lullaby) – as the key to establishing the tone of the entire piece. The first line of that lyric hangs on one word: 'and'. 'Summertime and the livin' is easy'. The obvious (and more boringly literate) choice would be 'Summertime when the livin' is easy'. But the lyricist's 'and' lends a poetic immediacy to the song. It adds an air of the colloquial and personal to Clara's languid lullaby. In other words, this 'community' has its own special way of expressing the loftiest emotions.

'Community' is another key contributor to the evolution and success of the piece. It is that which makes it so organic. The great set-pieces – Robbins' Wake, the Picnic, the Storm (how astonishing is that six-part improvisatory passage at its close) – are its emotional climacterics. When he was writing the score Gershwin cited Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* as one source of inspiration to him. Clearly it had not eluded him that Wagner's success lay in identifying his 'community' individually and collectively. And that's exactly what Gershwin does in *Porgy and Bess*. Plus everything about the piece is symphonically unified from a network of Wagner-like leitmotifs. They carry the emotional memory of the piece forward, they bind the orchestral and vocal elements. The last thing you hear as Porgy sets off on his impossible quest to find Bess at the close of the opera is Porgy's theme conjoined with 'Bess, you is my woman now'. It's *Tristan und Isolde* all over again – two souls reunited in death.

So why is *Porgy and Bess* so rarely staged? It has very particular demands – of course, it does – but could it also be that its challenges are not entirely compatible with its hit 'songs' in the public's imagination. Both Broadway and the West End attempted to reinvent it as a book-song musical, retaining the 'numbers' but stripping away much of the through-sung superstructure and replacing it with dialogue. What a betrayal of Gershwin's achievement.

But alas, it's a sign of our times. Never mind the context, give us the great songs. The conductor of the latest ENO revival was John Wilson – established champion of Broadway and Hollywood fare – but I think there is little doubt that the enthusiastic audiences for his 'greatest hits' concerts up and down the land would always favour the compilation format over complete shows. We can only hope that in the case of *Porgy and Bess* diversity will finally win the day for this enduring masterpiece. 

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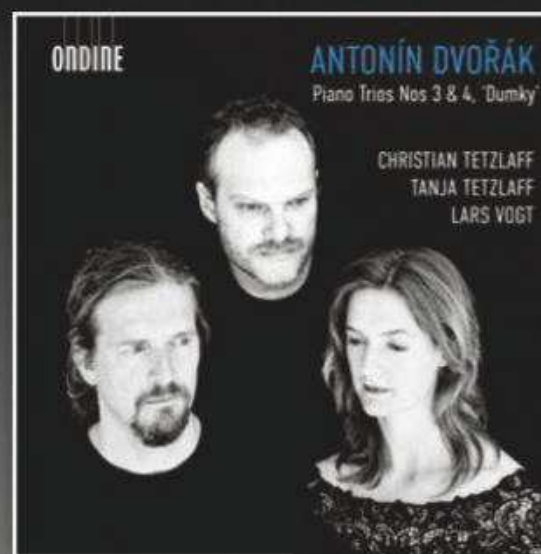
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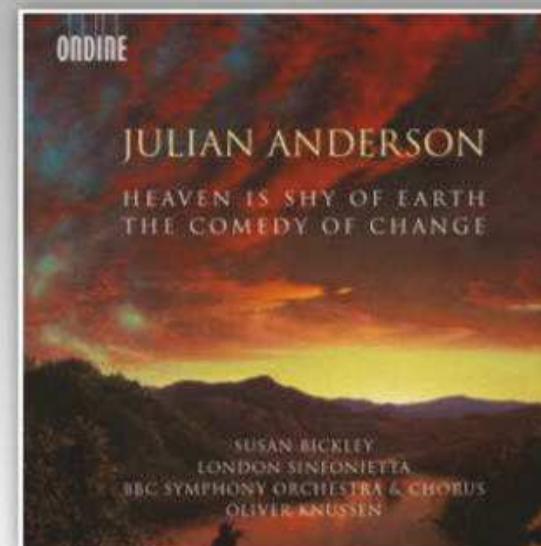
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THE CONTINUING RISE OF ROSSINI

As we commemorate 150 years since the composer's death, Richard Osborne explores how the centenary paved the way for an even greater appreciation of Rossini's operas 50 years on

The modern marriage of commerce and commemoration is not the only model where anniversaries are concerned. Back in 1784, three loyal Handelians were so dismayed by the state into which the great man's reputation had already fallen that they determined to stage a centenary tribute. Using a monument in Westminster Abbey as their Wikipedia, they misinterpreted the date. But no matter. Twenty-five years on from Handel's death, the epic London Handel Festival was precisely the boost the music needed. Handel's reputation never looked back.

Bach, too, needed a centenary – specifically the launch in 1850 of the great Bach-Gesellschaft edition of his works – to have the seal put on his musical immortality. 'What a colossus that man is!' exclaimed Rossini, one of the edition's earliest subscribers.

Since then, it has been rarer to find genius, once acknowledged, falling into neglect, though the 1960s were witness to two unusual happenings. First, the double anniversary of Gustav Mahler's birth and death in 1960-61 brought about a flowering of interest in his music that has yet to abate. Then, in 1968, the centenary of Rossini's death had the happy effect of both coinciding with and inspiring a revival of interest in his operas, the scale of which is without precedent in modern times.

A LEGEND DEPARTS

Four thousand people crammed into Sainte-Trinité, Paris's newest and largest church, for Rossini's funeral in November 1868; and as many again lined the route to his temporary resting place in Père-Lachaise. He was mourned throughout Europe. In London, *The Times* declared: 'With him has departed one of the most remarkable geniuses and one of the kindest spirits of the 19th century.'

It's easily forgotten that at the time of his death Rossini remained Europe's most renowned living composer. Nor was he a spent force creatively. His opera-writing days may have been long gone but during the Indian Summer which followed



Gioachino Rossini, pictured 12 years before his death in 1868

his return to Paris, in 1855 after a long illness, he wrote the 150 exquisitely crafted small pieces he called his 'Sins of Old Age'. Among these was one last masterpiece, the *Petite Messe solennelle*, which he completed in 1864, at the age of 72, for private performance in Paris.

A STYLE DEFERRED

The *Petite Messe solennelle* breathes the spirit of courtier times. And therein lay the problem. Rossini had been born into a golden age of beautiful singing. It was a phenomenon the castrati had mainly made, both as teachers and performers; and it was this to which Rossini was heir. Like many great cultural blossomings, the age of Italian *bel canto*, created by Rossini and perpetuated and enriched by Donizetti and Bellini, was relatively short-lived. By the late 1840s a new breed of powerhouse performers had taken charge: tenors parading their stentorian high Cs 'from the chest', pianists after the death of Chopin playing pre-fabricated, copyright-clad showpieces on ever more powerful instruments.

Rossini's problem was that for the next 100 years fewer and fewer singers could cope with his music, or what was left of it, as his 39-strong operatic legacy narrowed to a handful of works: *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (Rosina's role transposed up to become a showcase for *leggiere* sopranos), *Guillaume Tell* (bawled, foreshortened, and mostly sung in Italian) and *Semiramide* (an occasional vehicle for star sopranos such as Patti or Melba).

EARLY RECORDINGS

Extracts from those operas, and the *Stabat mater*, occasionally made their way on to record in the early years of the gramophone. Little of this sounds well today, though Fernando de Lucia's Count Almaviva recordings, *bel canto* singing in its purest form, have yet to be equalled. And what would we give now for a bass of Pol Plançon's pedigree and technique?

An early harbinger of the return of the mezzo-soprano, or contralto with a soprano extension, for which many of Rossini's leading roles were written, came with the arrival of the Spanish-

born phenomenon Conchita Supervía. During the 1934-35 Covent Garden season, staged by Sir Thomas Beecham in uneasy cohabitation with Francis Toye, author of the best-selling but wildly unreliable *Rossini: A Study in Tragi-Comedy* (London, 1934), Supervía's Cenerentola mesmerised such patrons as were prepared to listen.

A NEW DAWN

Scholarly interest in Rossini's life and work began to gather pace in the interwar years. Between 1927 and 1929 the composer and musicologist Giuseppe Radiciotti published (largely at his own expense) a handsomely designed, limited-edition, three-volume 'life, documents and works'. At much the same time, Vittorio Gui and Tullio Serafin, old-school polymaths who not only conducted and taught but composed, edited and researched, were making important advances of their own.

Italy's entry into the Second World War sabotaged many of the plans for the 1942 sesquicentenary of Rossini's birth, though Gui's much-needed new performing edition of *Il barbiere* duly appeared.

As the dust settled after the war, a new phenomenon emerged in the form of the 24-year-old Maria Callas, whose playing of Bellini's *Norma* in Florence in 1948 set the musical world by its ears. What personality was here, and what technique! It was as if the role's creator, Giuditta Pasta, had been reborn.

Rossini had to wait for his big Callas moment. This came when she sang the title-role in *Armida* at the 1952 Maggio Musicale in Florence. The festival – the 1942 retrospective delayed by a decade – revived three neglected comedies (*La scala di seta*, *La pietra del paragone* and *Le Comte Ory*) and three serious operas (*Tancredi*, *Armida* and *Guillaume Tell*). Vestiges of that Maggio Musicale *Armida* exist in a technically execrable live recording currently available from Warner Classics, but Callas's *Armida* is better sampled in a 1954 RAI recital where she sings the great Act 2 aria 'D'amore al dolce impero'.

Callas had already astonished her admirers with her portrayal of the vixenish Fiorilla in *Il turco in Italia* in Rome in 1950. The text was flawed, lacking Fiorilla's all-important final aria, and remained so when she recorded the role for EMI in 1954. But the work itself had been resurrected. Her Rosina, seen on stage in Milan in 1956, was widely disliked. 'Excitable, nervous, overpowering,' said *Opera*. Yet the 1957 EMI recording, with much the same cast, though with Galliera replacing Giulini as conductor, would quickly establish itself as the best (certainly the most characterful) *Il barbiere* on record.

Finding coloratura Rossini basses was a near impossibility in the 1950s; a serious drawback given the many important bass roles Rossini wrote, ranging from the comic leads in



Maria Callas's Rosina at La Scala in 1956 was disliked, but a year later her EMI *Barbiere* became the best on record

L'inganno felice and *La pietra del paragone* (memorably recorded in 1971 with John Reardon in the title-role, Vanguard 12/92, nla) to *Mosè in Egitto* and beyond.

Meanwhile, the true *opera seria* tenor was virtually extinct. The problem dated back to Rossini's time at the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples (1815-22) when he wrote competing and complementary roles for the quasi-baritone Andrea Nozzari (creator of such parts as Otello and Pirro in *Ermione*) and the high coloratura Giovanni David (player of emotional neurotics such as Rodrigo and Oreste). It was a problem that kept many of the Neapolitan *opere serie* off the stage until the arrival, more than 150 years on, of singers such as Chris Merritt and Rockwell Blake, Bruce Ford and William Matteuzzi.

They in turn were helped by the emergence of a number of high-quality coloratura mezzos, prime among whom was Marilyn Horne. For some years, Horne forged a memorable

partnership with soprano Katia Ricciarelli, not least in *Tancredi*, that vocally exquisite dramatic idyll for which Philip Gossett, greatest of Rossini scholars, had recently unearthed Rossini's alternative tragic ending.

I vividly recall a 1986 concert staging of the then barely known *Bianca e Falliero*. Inspired by the age-old theme of young love blighted by parental hate, this is just about the most ferocious piece, vocally and dramatically, Rossini wrote. Ricciarelli was past her best but Horne was in sensational form as the young general Falliero.

SEARCHING OUT TEXT

Not the least of the problems facing the post-war Rossini revival was finding reliable performing editions; a situation that had been complicated by the destruction during the war of much of the archive of printed music belonging to Italy's principal music publisher Ricordi. Glyndebourne was fortunate to have Vittorio Gui as its music director when it staged and recorded *La Cenerentola* in 1952, followed by an



Montserrat Caballé and Marilyn Horne in *Semiramide* at San Francisco Opera, 1981

unforgettable *Le Comte Ory*. However, when the Wexford Festival decided to revive the very revivable *La gazza ladra* in 1959, the only parts Ricordi was able to provide came from an eccentrically revised and reorchestrated version by the composer (and director of the Rossini Conservatoire in Pesaro) Riccardo Zandonai. Yet the opera triumphed, not least because of the Pippo of a young ingénue by the name of Janet Baker.

Where an autograph manuscript was readily to hand, an edition would be made, as happened with the 1962 La Scala, Milan revival of *Semiramide* and its sequel recorded for Decca in 1965, conducted by Richard Bonyngue with Joan Sutherland and Marilyn Horne. Comparable initiatives

followed during the 1970s and '80s, with Claudio Scimone making a series of important recordings of hitherto forgotten *opere serie* such as *Maometto Secondo*, *Ermione* and *Zelmira*.

The last gasp of the bad old days came in 1975 with an EMI recording whose English-language title *The Siege of*



The revival of *Il viaggio a Reims* under Claudio Abbado at the 1984 Pesaro Festival remains 'a red-letter event in the annals of Rossini scholarship and performance'

THE 1968 CENTENARY

RCA was horrified. The costs of transcribing the music and hiring the orchestral parts was likely to be exorbitant; the sales, they feared, negligible. But Caballé, 34 and the new singing sensation of the age, insisted. She would go on to make further distinctive contributions to the Rossini discography, notably the still unsurpassed 1972 HMV recording of *Guillaume Tell* and the 1975 Philips recording of *Elisabetta, regina d'Inghilterra*.

The centenary's greatest legacy, however, would be the inauguration of the idea of a critical edition of Rossini's entire musical output. Two things had helped make this possible. The first was Rossini's decision to bequeath the bulk of his estate to the founding of a music academy in his birthplace Pesaro. Established in 1869, it was subdivided in 1940 into a school and a research foundation. The second was the survival of the autograph manuscripts of all but three of Rossini's 39 operas. An additional – somewhat *opera buffa* – aspect of the initiative was its being propelled into life by a ferocious and well-publicised spat between Casa Ricordi (Rossini's preferred publisher since 1814) and a young Italian conductor, Alberto Zedda.

Zedda had studied philosophy at university before wheedling his way as a mature student into the Milan Conservatory where his organ teacher was the multi-tasking Alceo Galliera. When Galliera recorded *Il barbiere* with Callas and Tito Gobbi in London in 1957 he knew what parts to use and what to avoid. Not so the young Zedda. Charged with conducting a production of the opera at a famous teaching school in Milan, he found himself facing complaints from the orchestra that the Ricordi parts contained mistakes and misattributions (piccolo parts allocated to the oboes and the like) that made them unplayable.

Much embarrassed, Zedda decided to consult the autograph manuscript in Bologna. This was a hazardous business. (As Philip Gossett has said, an autograph manuscript is the source of all truth and the root of all uncertainty.) Zedda knew enough, however, to write a mass of corrections into the hire parts. Ricordi's response was to fine him for vandalising their property. Nothing daunted, Zedda successfully filed a counterclaim against Ricordi for supplying shoddy material.

Clearly there were no hard feelings, since it was Ricordi who published Zedda's new critical edition of *Il barbiere* – the first ever critical edition of an Italian opera – in 1969. Two years later,

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Garsington's 2002 *La gazza ladra* (top) was recorded by Chandos; the festival also premiered a new edition of *La Gazzetta* in 2001

the edition was recorded by Claudio Abbado, at much the same time as he recorded Zedda's new edition of *La Cenerentola*.

However, Rome wasn't built in a day. When *New Grove* editor Stanley Sadie, late of this parish, made the bold decision to commission a Rossini volume in the venerable *Master Musicians* series, one of my earliest tasks was to work out how to deal adequately with the mass of operas that had neither been staged nor reprinted since Rossini's lifetime. Poring

over an 1857 vocal score of *Ermione* in the British Library, it struck me that this Racine-derived *azione tragica* – Rossini's only 'failure' in Naples but a piece of which he was inordinately proud – was, indeed, a small masterpiece. 'Really?' the cry went up, half doubtful, half excited, when the *Master Musicians* volume eventually appeared in 1986.

By then a critical edition of *Ermione* was sufficiently advanced for the work to be staged – always the acid test – at the 1987 Rossini Opera Festival in Pesaro. The opera itself blazed forth, with Marilyn Horne, Chris Merritt, Rockwell Blake and others all making distinctive contributions. Unfortunately, Caballé, now in her fifties and a controversial choice for *Ermione*, seemed as uncertain of the work as her conductor Gustav Kuhn. The gallery in the lovely small Teatro Rossini was not amused.

Still, *Ermione* was back, as Mark Elder proved with a blazing concert performance in London in 1992 with Anna Caterina Antonacci as *Ermione*. The directors of opera houses from five continents were in the Queen Elizabeth Hall that evening, as a result of which several new productions were commissioned, including one by Glyndebourne, also featuring Antonacci, which Warner Vision filmed in 1995 (7/96, nla).

RETURN JOURNEY

The rediscovery which perhaps ranks highest in the list of those made since Rossini's death in 1868 is that of *Il viaggio a Reims* ('The Journey to Reims'), the lavish,

highly sophisticated entertainment which Rossini created in honour of Charles X's coronation in France in 1825. It was while on sabbatical from the University of Chicago in Rome in 1977 that Philip Gossett was presented with a pile of manuscript pages by the librarian of the Rome Conservatory. Signed by Rossini, they were marked 'Several Pieces from the Cantata *Il Viaggio a Reims*'. In fact, it was the entire work, less the pages Rossini had later reused for his opera

Le Comte Ory. The work's revival (and recording) under the direction of Claudio Abbado at the 1984 Pesaro Festival remains a red-letter event in the annals of Rossini scholarship and performance.

MISSION (MOSTLY) ACCOMPLISHED

By the turn of the century, all Rossini's 39 operas had been made available in some form or another. There had been a number of important players in this. Erik Smith commissioned and produced for Philips several pioneering recordings, including an *Otello* with José Carreras and Frederica von Stade and a *Mosè in Egitto* with Ruggero Raimondi. Patric Schmid and Don White, founders of the Opera Rara label, set in train an even more valuable sequence of recordings of mainly *opera seria* rarities. And then there was the patronage of the Naxos record company. After making an extraordinarily vivid recording of *Il barbiere* in Budapest in 1993, they went on to form a close association with the enterprising Rossini in Wildbad festival in southern Germany.

Genuinely successful recordings of the Stabat mater and Petite Messe solennelle can be counted on the fingers of one hand

In England, the late Leonard Ingrams made the Garsington Opera Festival an important place of pilgrimage for Rossinians, not least in 2001 when the Fondazione Rossini allowed its new edition of Rossini's Neapolitan romp *La Gazzetta* to be staged in Garsington two months before its Italian *prima*. Alas, the record companies showed little interest. Chandos took the 2002 production of *La gazza ladra* into the studio but (anathema to Leonard) insisted on its being sung in English.

By now the studio recording of opera, the jewel in the crown of the gramophone in the post-78 era, was going into freefall, as media organisations switched to marketing cost-effective spin-offs of live stage productions on DVD. Some worked, many proved unwatchable.

SACRED AND INSTRUMENTAL

It is not only Rossini's operas that have tested performers. Genuinely successful recordings of the *Stabat mater* and the *Petite Messe solennelle* can be counted on the fingers of just one hand. By far the best account of the *Messe*, a perfectly judged 1972 Baumburg monastery performance directed from the keyboard by Wolfgang Sawallisch, vanished years ago (RCA, 10/73, nla).

As for the delicious salon music, the *Soirées Musicales*, and the 150 items of late piano music and songs, the *Péchés de vieillesse* ('Sins of Old Age'), they have suffered the double indignity of deletions – notable recordings of the late piano music by Dino Ciani, Aldo Ciccolini and Bruno Mezzina – and an almost complete lack of critical notice afforded to such things as Naxos's ongoing project (2008-) of recording the complete *Péchés de vieillesse*. The fine anthology 'Rossini Songs' (Opera Rara, 12/09) is also currently unavailable.

THE SHOW GOES ON

It was Falstaff who said that he was not only witty in himself but the inspirer of wit in others. And so it has been with Rossini, such is the tunefulness and vitality of the best of his music. I imagine I am not alone in being exceptionally fond of Respighi's *La boutique fantasque* or Britten's Rossini-inspired

Soirées and *Matinées*. And is there a more life-enhancing record than 'Black Dyke Plays Rossini', first issued by Chandos in 1983?

The bottom line is that, whatever the immensity of Rossini's larger achievement as a composer – and we're talking here of the principal architect of 19th-century Italian opera, and a good deal of French and German opera too – his true legacy is that he has helped put a very large smile on the world's face. And, goodness, has it needed it! 🎵

Richard Osborne is widely respected for his extensive research and writings on Rossini; his translation of Ferdinand Hiller's revelatory 'Conversations with Rossini' was published in October by Pallas Athene.

► Richard Osborne reviews two major Rossini box-sets in Reissues on page 130

ESSENTIAL ROSSINI LISTENING GUIDE

Six benchmark recordings, from opera to late piano music



Il barbiere di Siviglia

Maria Callas *sop*
Luigi Alva *ten*
Tito Gobbi *bar*

Philharmonia / Alceo Galliera

Warner Classics ➡ (2/58)

A classic recording of what has become Rossini's most popular opera, featuring Maria Callas, the singer who revived for the modern age the sound and style of the true Rossini soprano.



Il barbiere di Siviglia

Teresa Berganza *sop*
Luigi Alva *ten*
Hermann Prey *bar*
La Scala Orch, Milan
/ Claudio Abbado

Jean-Pierre Ponnelle *director*

DG DVD (3/02)

Rossini was first and foremost a theatre composer, albeit one who, like his hero Mozart, used classical forms to drive the action and create the comedy. No director has understood this better, or realised it with greater wit and ingenuity, than Ponnelle whose masterpiece this surely is.



Il viaggio a Reims

Soloists; COE /
Claudio Abbado
DG (1/86)

The rediscovery and revival of this fantastical entertainment devised by Rossini for the coronation of France's Charles X in 1825 is one of the crown jewels of modern Rossini scholarship. This celebrated 1984 Pesaro Festival recording features leading Rossini singers of the day under Abbado's inspired direction.



Guillaume Tell

Montserrat Caballé *sop*
Nicolai Gedda *ten*
Gabriel Bacquier *bar*

RPO / Lamberto Gardelli

Warner Classics (11/73)

It took private money and a stellar cast to restore Rossini's much revived but much abused last opera to its pristine state, uncut and in the original French. Chief among the set's wonders is Montserrat Caballé's peerless account of the role of the peace-making Austrian princess Matilde.



Stabat mater

Soloists, Santa Cecilia Orch, Rome /
Antonio Pappano
EMI (1/11)

A believing Catholic, though at times a troubled one, Rossini used none of the forms familiar from his operas when creating this sacred masterwork of the *bel canto* age, a point that appears to have been well comprehended in this most beautifully prepared of all recordings of the work.



'Sins of Old Age, Vol. 7'

Soloists;
Alessandro Marangoni *pf*

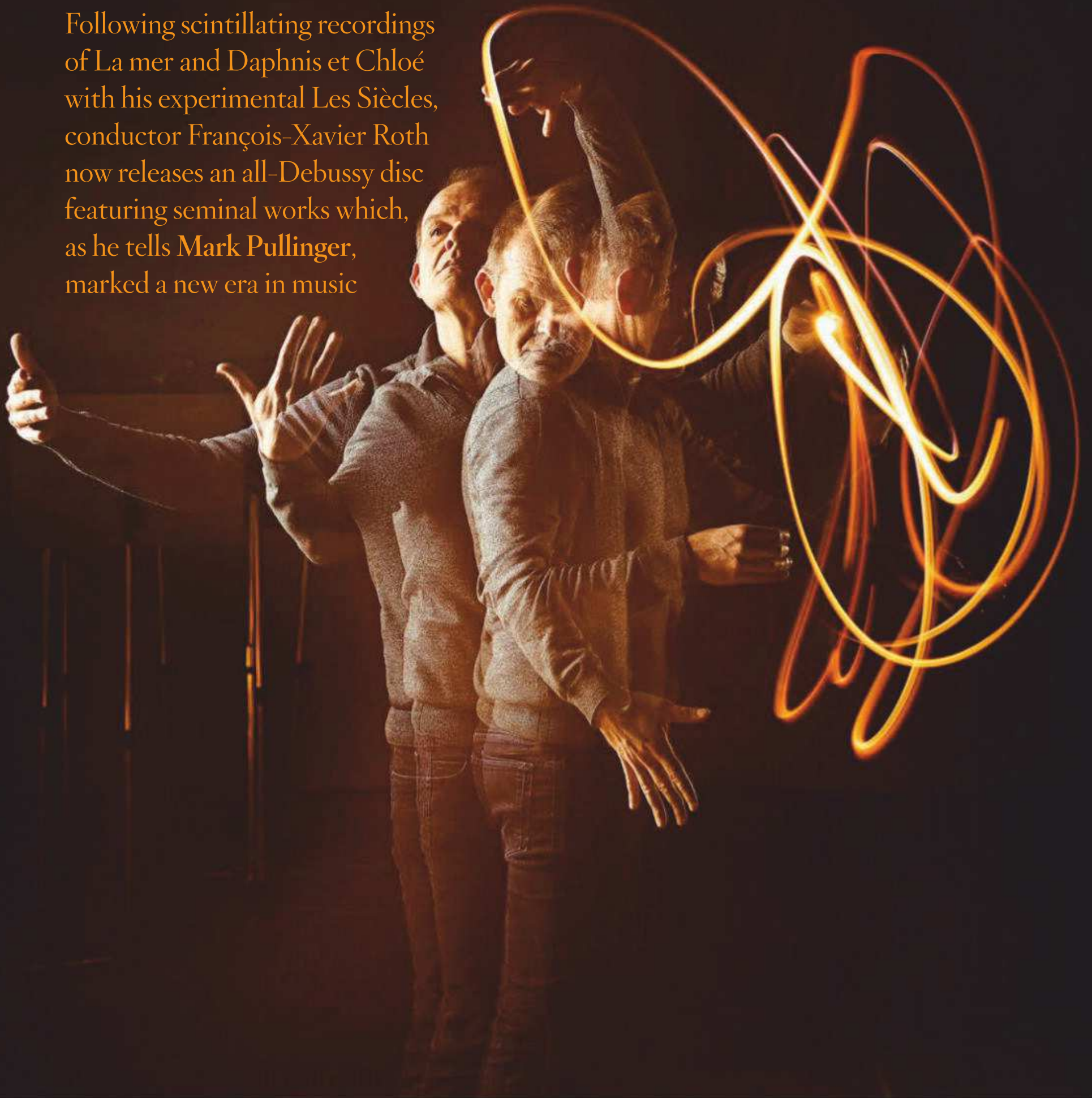
Ars Cantica / Marco Berrini

Naxos

For a taste of Rossini's wonderfully diverse array of late piano music and songs, this compilation CD, Volume 7 from Naxos's long-running exploration of his 'Sins of Old Age', provides as good a cue as any for further exploration of these much-neglected works.

Making waves in FRENCH MUSIC

Following scintillating recordings of *La mer* and *Daphnis et Chloé* with his experimental *Les Siècles*, conductor François-Xavier Roth now releases an all-Debussy disc featuring seminal works which, as he tells **Mark Pullinger**, marked a new era in music



Picture the scene. It's May 2017, and in Cologne's Philharmonie the Gürzenich Orchestra has just closed a programme of music inspired by the sea. Conductor François-Xavier Roth takes a microphone and saunters across to a piano ...

and proceeds to sing Charles Trenet's *La mer* as an encore, in a cheeky arrangement by Philipp Matthias Kaufmann which throws in splashes of Debussy's orchestral seascape.

Roth's timing was – unsurprisingly for this dapper Frenchman – impeccable. Two days earlier, Emmanuel Macron had fought off the far-right challenge from Marine Le Pen in the French presidential elections, and, as the conductor admits, it was with a huge sense of relief that he wanted to send out 'a nice, positive signal' to celebrate. 'In Cologne, they love French culture – food, songs – so it was my gift to them.'

Just two months later, Roth was created a chevalier of the *Légion d'honneur* in Macron's first Bastille Day honours list. It was conferred upon him this January by Françoise Nyssen of the French Ministry of Culture at Paris's space-age concert hall, the Philharmonie. The presentation followed a concert by his beloved orchestra, Les Siècles. I caught up with Roth during rehearsals for that concert to reflect upon his career and his probing approach to music-making.

'How can it be possible to propose a new perspective – for the listener to experience music they know already, but from different angles?'

Roth is now principal guest conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra, but his relationship with them goes right back to 2000 when he won the Donatella Flick LSO Conducting Competition – a crucial breakthrough. 'This was very important for me because it was the beginning, not just because it was the first time I met the LSO and had an opportunity to conduct them, but because it was the first time I had even travelled to London! Can you imagine? I was a young musician arriving at Barbican tube station ... it took me hours to find the hall!

'The competition was very important because suddenly I had confirmation that maybe I could really become a conductor. The management was very supportive in quite an old-fashioned way in not giving me too much, too soon. I didn't have 10 or 20 concerts, but instead I had the chance to keep learning, to be an assistant conductor, to observe, to shadow Sir Colin Davis and all the guest conductors like Pierre Boulez and Mariss Jansons. It was a great opportunity.'

Roth's burgeoning career took him to the BBC National Orchestra of Wales (as associate guest conductor), the Liège Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (music director) and the SWR Symphony Orchestra Baden-Baden and Freiburg as the orchestra's final principal conductor before it was controversially merged with the Stuttgart RSO to form the SWR Symphony Orchestra Stuttgart. 'It was a fight,' Roth admits, 'and I wouldn't accept the decision. I was totally against it. Unfortunately, we didn't win, but I had some wonderful years with them – we made great music together.' The partnership yielded a distinguished five-disc set of Strauss tone poems on Hänssler/SWR Music, but

Roth decided not to return after the merger because he'd been so against the decision. 'I had to stop my work with them much too early. It's a sadness, but that's life.'

Roth's new German orchestra, the Gürzenich, has a totally different heritage and culture. 'Cologne is a very musical city. It's not so German – in the sense that you are close to Holland, to France, to Belgium. It's an old musical institution with a great history. Berlioz, Brahms and Mahler all came here.' Indeed, Mahler premiered his Fifth Symphony with the Gürzenich in 1904, and Roth chose that work for their first disc together, an account David Gutman praised in these pages (3/18) for the freshness of its Scherzo and the 'hushed, virginal quality' of the *Adagietto*, taken almost as slowly as Leonard Bernstein's famous DG account with the Vienna Philharmonic.

Cologne was also an important destination for the avant-garde, such as Stockhausen and Zimmermann. 'It's *the* orchestra of the city, so Gürzenich is a famous name, a family name, in Cologne. What I like very much is that I can experiment there because I have such a great trust in the orchestra and in the audience. I can explore different repertoires, different combinations, and propose something really ambitious which I think suits the mood of the city. We must be experimental there.'

Yet the orchestra with which Roth has dared to be most experimental is Les Siècles, the ensemble he formed back in 2003. Together they've made a huge impact on the classical music world. What were his founding principles for the orchestra's creation? 'At the beginning,' Roth explains, 'it was more to do with the repertoire – it was about having an orchestra that could change its shape, its style, and confront repertoire from different periods. But I also had in mind that I wanted to achieve the period-instrument aspect very quickly, so we started buying gut strings to test them out and then, progressively, moved on to woodwind and brass.'

And what colours Les Siècles paint! Their oriental-themed programme was my highlight from the 2017 BBC Proms, a delicious travelogue from Saint-Saëns's *Egyptian* Piano Concerto No 5 to ballet music from Delibes's *Lakmé* and Lalo's *Namouna*, all performed with Gallic panache. The programme was Roth's chapeau to Brits such as Sir Thomas Beecham who championed this sort of repertoire when it was being neglected in France. Lemon-drop piquancy to the oboe, nutty woodwind flavours, cinnamon-infused exotic percussion: it was a feast for the musical gourmet, capped off with a pulsating, orgiastic Bacchanale from *Samson et Dalila*.

Roth's programming with Les Siècles is highly inventive. Who can forget their 2013 Prom which took the audience through the history of French dance, from Lully – Roth beating time with a staff (thankfully not sharing Lully's fate of striking himself on the foot, cause of the gangrene which killed the composer) – through to Stravinsky and an unforgettable account of *Le sacre du printemps*? In Paris in January, he imaginatively paired Debussy with Boulez's *Rituel in memoriam Bruno Maderna*, the programme preceded by a full gamelan introduction. How important is it for him to have that mix of 'ancient and modern'?

'When I started to conduct, I was a little frustrated – as a music lover, as a student and as a concert-goer – that I would hear the avant-garde, or the early Baroque, but only on very rare occasions could you experience these very different kinds of music in the same concert. Here at the

Cité de la Musique, before the Philharmonie was built, I heard the Ensemble Intercontemporain with Boulez sharing a programme with Les Arts Florissants and Bill Christie. Still, it was not the same players playing everything – it was two very different specialist groups! The perspectives it gave me were fantastic, though. Why should it be forbidden to have in the same concert musics which may be far apart chronologically, but which perhaps say the same things or try to reach the same goals?’

It is this philosophy that guides Roth. ‘We spend a lot of time as musicians performing music which is already known by audiences; so how is it possible to propose a new perspective – for the listener to experience music they know already from different angles? I’m passionate about programming and it’s what is at the heart of Les Siècles. When we do a programme like the Boulez–Debussy, I imagine it says a lot about how I see Debussy and how I see Boulez. It would have been totally different if we had performed *Nocturnes* and *La mer* with a more conservative 20th-century composer. So a certain perspective is given to the audience.’

Roth and Les Siècles have already produced a superb recording of *La mer*, and they plan to continue their recorded Ravel survey from which the first release – a scintillating *Daphnis et Chloé* – won the Orchestral category at this year’s Gramophone Awards. Roth also has plans to mark the 150th anniversary of the death of Berlioz, not least regarding the location of the composer’s resting place. ‘Berlioz is still buried in Montmartre and I would love it if for this anniversary he could be moved to the Panthéon. I’m going to start a lobbying campaign!’ And in terms of repertoire, Roth and Les Siècles have just recorded *Les nuits d’été* (with baritone Stéphane Degout) and *Harold en Italie* (with viola player Tabea Zimmermann), due for release in January next year. But still he is impatient to explore new territories with this orchestra; his plans include extending the Beethoven in their repertoire and performing works such as the original, five-movement version of Mahler’s First Symphony. Schumann, Mendelssohn and Brahms also beckon, along with the Second Viennese School: ‘With the culture of this orchestra, I think this will be something very very special.’

At the start of this year, Roth’s focus returned to Debussy in the months leading up to the centenary of the composer’s death. At the Barbican, he conducted a three-concert series with the London Symphony Orchestra (in his role as newly



Recording Roth’s forthcoming Berlioz disc, with Stéphane Degout and Les Siècles

‘Considering what came before and after, Faune is not that provocative a piece – but it takes people by the hand to a new era’

appointed principal guest conductor) which garnered critical plaudits. I saw the middle concert of the three, containing *Prélude à L’après-midi d’un faune*, *Jeux* and *Nocturnes*, the first two of which were being set down for a 2023 release on LSO Live. And here we both were again, three days later in Paris, where Roth was preparing to perform *Nocturnes* once more, this time with Les Siècles,

destined for release on Harmonia Mundi, where it will be programmed with ... *Jeux* and *Prélude à L’après-midi d’un faune*! Roth’s face creases into a smile and he giggles at the coincidence.

In concert, the biggest difference in *Nocturnes* came in ‘Sirènes’, the third movement. At the Barbican, Roth had the 60 ladies of the London Symphony Chorus, whose massed ululations, I’m afraid, lacked allure. At the Philharmonie he employed only 16 voices from the excellent Les Cris de Paris, split up and scattered among the orchestra, creating a mesmerising effect.

Faune has been an important work for Roth, a former flautist, since his student days. ‘When I started to study it properly, I was at the Abbaye de Royaumont, close to Paris, where there is a big Debussy archive. There are so many different versions! As a performer, it’s a nightmare to know what Debussy wanted. *Faune* was a big success at its premiere but he was never happy with the final corrections in the score – he started to change things, to set precise tempi – so it’s difficult to decide what to do, how to conduct. Do you take his first gestures or his final views as an older composer?’

‘When you play *Faune*, you have the feeling that suddenly the space changes in the room – there are no limits any more in the architecture of the venue itself because of the harmonies and the sounds Debussy chooses. It is the beginning of modern music – the use of harmony where tonality is not fixed any more. It’s a prelude, but it’s nothing at all virtuoso or loud to open a concert. It’s subtle, an evocation, suggestive’ – without Mallarmé’s words being prescriptive, I add. ‘Exactly. When you



'I'm passionate about programming': Roth is impatient to explore new territories


consider what came before or immediately after *Faune*, it's not that provocative a piece, but it takes people by the hand to a new era.'

Roth is willing to stretch the silences between phrases by some distance, but his *Faune* is not unduly languorous. He has conducted three Nijinsky ballets – *Faune*, *Jeux* and *Le sacre du printemps* – with reconstructions of Nijinsky's choreography, and recognises the tempo traps. 'Because *Faune* is such gorgeous music, it has come to be performed slower and slower. Debussy's indications are that he didn't want it to be so slow and so heavy – this is not heavy music.'

Jeux received its premiere just a couple of weeks before *Le sacre*. It's a ballet that doesn't get danced much today and a score that doesn't get played too often in concert either. 'Selling it' isn't easy, admits Roth, who suggests its length is problematic for programmers: '*Jeux* is too long for a prelude to a concert, but too short for a main work. And it's not music that provokes a big roar at the end – actually, quite the opposite. But when you get into the score, it is one of the most complicated to perform. So put all that together and it doesn't encourage you!'

Debussy sets a tough challenge for the conductor of *Jeux*, owing to the work's myriad tempo changes. 'There are so many things to digest as performers, such as understanding how the tempo flows and how the rubato is precisely written into the score. Boulez used to say that there is a "fragility" in the tempo of *Jeux* – which is a very good word, because it is something that is never fixed. Even if it's a scherzo, the tempo moves a lot.'

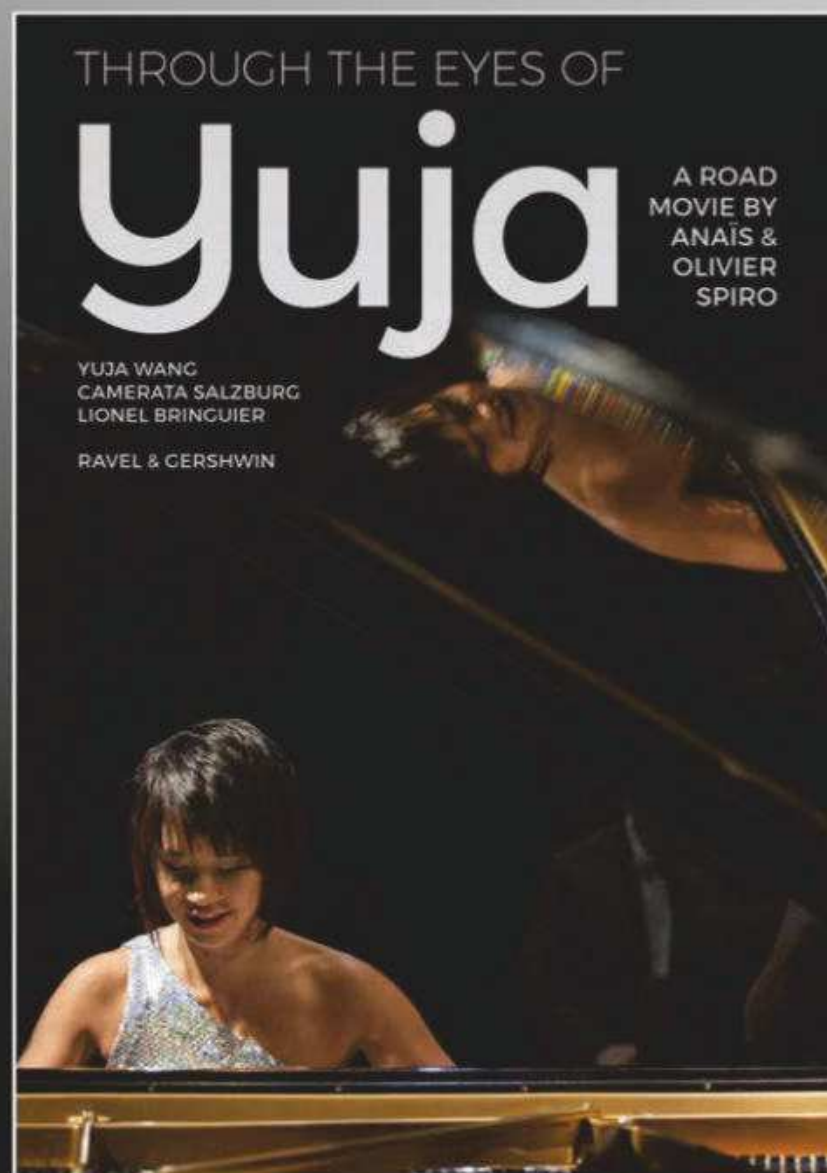
However challenging the piece may be, Roth's performance with Les Siècles at the Royal Festival Hall, London, in November 2016 was miraculous. As I wrote in a review at the time, I was immediately struck by the 'diaphanous strings and perfumed woodwinds' which 'wove in and out the bosky shadows of Debussy's erotically charged score'. The final string sigh – played as a tennis ball was tossed limply to the stage causing the startled trio to disperse – was also deliciously done.

Roth suggests that, in terms of how the form of music could change, *Jeux* – even more than *Prélude à L'après-midi d'un faune* – was the big stone to cause ripples in the 20th-century pond. 'When you talk about *Sacre*, its form is very old. It's tableaux,' he says. 'With *Jeux*, it's a process of transformation which is totally new. Debussy isn't looking back, this is music that's constantly evolving. *Jeux* was an amazing statement of how the possibilities of music could develop.' 

► To read Gramophone's review of the Les Siècles Debussy disc, turn to page 61

PHOTOGRAPHY: JEAN-MARC BERNIS, PHILIPPE STIRNWEISS

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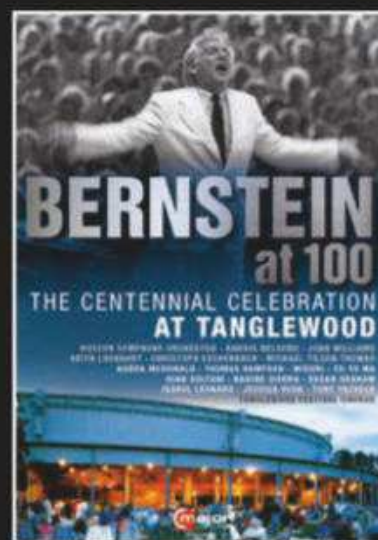
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Gramophone Editor's Choice, November 2018



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Out of the blue

The devotion of Gramophone Award-winning US vocal ensemble Blue Heron to the restoration of the Peterhouse Partbooks and other 'new' early music is setting them apart, finds **Fabrice Fitch**

Until a mere few months ago, relatively few listeners this side of the pond would have heard of the American vocal ensemble Blue Heron. The announcement of the shortlist for the 2018 *Gramophone* Awards changed all that, and in September it became the first ever non-European group to top the voting in the Early Music category. That it did so with a recording whose centrepiece is a mass by an unknown composer is surely another first. Its Award-winning disc is the fifth of a set devoted to the Peterhouse Partbooks, a repertory that until recently could not even be performed – a seemingly inauspicious start to a triumphant collaboration between a performing ensemble and Nick Sandon, a prominent scholar of English Renaissance music.

I asked the ensemble's director, Scott Metcalfe (pictured above, far right), how it all came about. 'It goes back to the lead-up to our very first concert in 1999; we wanted to perform English Renaissance polyphony, but before Byrd and Tallis. I was leafing through music in my local music shop and found this score of Hugh Aston's *Ave Maria dive matris Anne*. I'd vaguely heard of Aston, so I took the piece home and read through it, and it made a very strong impression. We performed it, we fell

in love with it, and the audience really felt its power – Aston speaks with such a distinct, emotional voice. Well, I'd read in the edition that the tenor part had been restored because the partbook containing it had been lost, and that there were about seventy other pieces in the collection, including entire masses, and I thought: "We should do more." Not long afterwards, I wrote to the editor, Nick Sandon, who confirmed my impression that nobody else was performing this music, let alone recording it, and I saw an opportunity.'

As anyone who has heard Blue Heron's recordings will know, the Peterhouse Partbooks are indeed a treasure trove. Their current location in one of the University of Cambridge's smaller colleges gives the impression of a relatively peripheral source, but Sandon believes that they were compiled for use at Canterbury Cathedral, no less, through the agency of a lay clerk who brought the music with him from Magdalen College, Oxford. If Sandon's hypothesis is correct (his reasoning is lucidly and engagingly set out in his annotations to the recordings), then the partbooks are anything but peripheral. In fact, the cross-section of music they contain is hugely significant, bearing witness to the late flowering of Catholic liturgical music in the last years of Henry VIII, a keen musician and a religious conservative for all the revolution he had

unleashed. Like the Eton Choirbook a couple of generations before, they contain music by the elder statesmen of the time (Fayrfax was dead, and the careers of Taverner and Ludford had run their courses) alongside works by obscure composers such as Hugh Sturmy; but unlike Eton, they also contain anonymous works, for example the unnamed Mass recorded on Blue Heron's Award-winning disc. There is no problem performing the music that the partbooks share with other sources; but because of that missing tenor book in particular, the 50 or so pieces that exist only there couldn't be performed – including Masses by Ludford, two of which feature in Blue Heron's set. Hence the significance of the collaboration between Sandon and the ensemble, which makes available for the first time a repertoire that is both historically important and on a very high level artistically.

Following its first concert, Blue Heron established itself in the Boston area, eventually making its first recording (songs and motets of Du Fay) in 2006. Meanwhile, the Peterhouse project bubbled away in the background. Metcalfe kept in touch with Sandon, and Blue Heron carried on performing from his editions. The first recording of the series was issued in 2010, with the later volumes appearing every couple of years. For Sandon, who had been working on reconstructing the Peterhouse repertoire on his own for many years, the contact with Blue Heron, and with Metcalfe, was transformative. 'Previously, my evaluation of the music was based on what I could hear in my head, my own amateur performances and a few single performances of variable quality by professional ensembles. For the first time, somebody showed sustained interest, asked penetrating questions and made perceptive suggestions, which I found enormously reassuring. Hearing the superlative performances by Blue Heron has convinced me that this music is as good as – sometimes even better than – I always thought it was, and that the best of my restorations really are as idiomatic as I tried to make them. The prospect of performance and recording and the existence of deadlines are also great incentives towards publication and revision. I'm glad that Blue Heron's interest in particular pieces has given me an excuse to revisit some of the restorations that I published fairly early in the series, because with several decades' further experience I have been able to improve them significantly.'

I asked Sandon how he reimagines those missing voices. 'Well, stylish restoration requires one to observe and react on several levels at once: how the composer is shaping and pacing the overall musical discourse; what the extant voices imply about the original scoring and the position of the missing voices within the texture. One also has to imagine as accurately as possible in one's head the sound of what remains of the original vocal complex, and predict how various ways of completing the texture will change how it sounds. The best substitute for a well-trained aural imagination is a competent group of singers: playing alternatives through at the keyboard will give a very misleading idea of how they will sound on voices, and mechanical playback through a lifeless synthesised vocal ensemble may obscure gestures and details that would be very telling in a performance by intelligent singers. Scott and Blue Heron have often astonished me by finding even more in my restorations than I knew to be present.' So is it genuinely a two-way process, then? Metcalfe agrees: 'Nick's constantly revising; tiny changes that appear insignificant in the context of a bar somehow end up affecting the entire piece. So he's always changing things, every time he reprints the music – trying to make things work better.'

Given his importance to the project, it's fitting that Sandon was on hand when Metcalfe received the *Gramophone* Award in London in September, for the result is a series equal in scope and ambition to the five-disc set devoted to the Eton Choirbook by Christ Church Cathedral Choir. (Intriguingly, the emphasis on previously unrecorded pieces from Eton is another connection between the projects, as is the overall timescale of the releases.) But the Eton Choirbook is a known quantity in early music circles, as is the choir that Stephen Darlington led for many years; Blue Heron, by contrast, is a self-publishing ensemble, relying as much as anything on the support of donors and patrons. I asked Metcalfe about Blue Heron's championing of Renaissance polyphony stateside. 'It's a harder sell with concert promoters than it is with audiences; when people actually come into contact with Renaissance polyphony they're won over. But there is a flowering of professional vocal ensembles in the US at the moment, all contributing to create a culture in which vocal chamber music is rightfully regarded as the equal of the standard instrumental repertoire. What sets Blue Heron apart, I think, is that we focus on chamber music more than on "choral" music (although the Peterhouse project may give the opposite impression) and that, more like a new-music ensemble than a traditional early music

ensemble, we mostly present repertoire that hasn't been performed much, if at all; and the Peterhouse set does accurately represent our commitment to "new" early music.'

'More like a new-music ensemble, Blue Heron presents repertoire that hasn't been performed much, if at all' – Scott Metcalfe, director

Dovetailing with the Peterhouse project is an ambitious undertaking to perform all of Ockeghem's music in a series of 13 concerts, alongside music from his contemporaries that inspired it or complement it significantly. At the time of our interview, Blue Heron was preparing to record all the composer's songs (of which this writer has in fact edited a couple); discs of highlights from his sacred music will follow. But for all the group's emphasis on historically informed performance, Metcalfe's approach is anything but dogmatic, as the videos occasionally released on YouTube demonstrate. 'For the sacred music, there's little doubt that all-vocal performance works best, but when it comes to the songs, there are some that we've tried several ways: with instruments, or with just voices, the voices all singing text, or with the text sung in only one voice and the others vocalised. It's not always possible to say which is the most likely or appropriate; you go with what seems to fit the music best. Our ideal is to adapt our collective sound as much as possible to the music we're singing, and specifically to be guided by the language. The way words are spoken affects how the music sits in the voice, and although we can't transform ourselves into native French, Spanish or Italian speakers, getting as close as we can really helps us with musical articulation, direction and pacing.' When I press Metcalfe to define the group's approach more precisely, he uses words that one no longer hears that often from the mouths of performers. 'At the end of the day we're really hardcore performance practice people. Not because it's "authentic" or because we're trying to "recreate" anything, but because finding out as much as we can about past ways of making music can open up for us new ways of hearing things, new ways of singing and new means of expression.'

'The Lost Music of Canterbury: Music from the Peterhouse Partbooks', a five-disc set of all the music released on individual discs between 2010 and 2017, including the Gramophone Award-winning CD, is out now on the Blue Heron label, containing a new, unified booklet

MUSIC COMPETITIONS GUIDE

It's not only first-class musicians who can participate in international music competitions these days – with an increasing number being live-streamed, just about anyone can watch. Our international guide includes information on how to enter, and how to be in the audience



Dame Felicity Lott applauds the Second Prize-winner, baritone John Brancy, at the Wigmore Hall/Kohn Foundation International Song Competition in September 2017

UK GUIDE

BBC Cardiff Singer of the World

Next competition: June 15-22, 2019

Application deadline: now closed

The 2019 edition of this major biennial competition sees the return of its two resident orchestras, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and the Welsh National Opera Orchestra, and also its two accompanists, Llyr Williams and Simon Lepper. It's worth making the trip to Cardiff too, because the city also plays host to a good list of surrounding fringe events such as films, recitals, masterclasses and talks. As for the actual competition, the Royal Welsh

College of Music & Drama is home to the Song Prize rounds, while St David's Hall is the venue for the main prize rounds and both finals. Needless to say, however, if you can't make it to Cardiff the BBC airwaves will be awash with the competition and you can catch it on radio, TV and online across the week.

bbc.co.uk/cardiffsinger

BBC Young Musician of the Year

Next competition: 2020

Applications deadline: see website

Open to string, percussion, woodwind, brass and keyboard players aged 18 or under on

January 1, 2020, this biennial competition celebrated its 40th year in 2018 when it was won by 16-year-old pianist Lauren Zhang. It has a habit of making stars of its winners, as proved by its distinguished laureates and the success of its recent winners such as Sheku Kanneh-Mason.

bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00bb3wt

Donatella Flick/LSO Conducting Competition

Next competition:

November 2020

Applications deadline: see website

The stakes are high for the three

young European Union-based conductors who make it through to the finals of this biennial competition run by the LSO because the winner is named as the LSO's assistant conductor; previous winners include LSO Principal Guest Conductor François-Xavier Roth. lso.co.uk/lso-discovery/donatella-flick-lso-conducting-competition

Early Music Young Ensemble Competition

Next competition: Autumn 2020

Applications deadline: see website

Launched in November 2018, this biennial competition is part

of the Early Music Shop's 50th anniversary celebrations. It's open to ensembles of all nationalities of two or more players whose average age is under 30. Repertoire needs to be pre-1800, but musicians need to show potential for playing a contemporary piece written for period instruments. The 2018 competition took place in Blackheath; judges Emma Kirkby, James Johnstone and Tom Beets awarded a first prize of £1500 and a recital at the London Exhibition of Early Music 2019.

earlymusicshop.com/pages/early-music-young-ensemble-competition

Handel Singing Competition

Next competition:

first round February 6-8, semi-final March 5, final April 6, 2019

Applications deadline: see website

Established in 2002, this vocal competition for singers aged between 23 and 34 attracts some 150 international competitors. Past finalists include Iestyn Davies, Ruby Hughes and Lucy Crowe. Its final at St George's Hanover Square, where finalists are accompanied by the London Handel Orchestra under Laurence Cummings, is open to the public as part of the annual London Handel Festival. First prize is £5000; second is £2000. **london-handel-festival.com/page/competition/24/**

Hastings International Piano Competition

Next competition:

February 21 - March 2, 2019

Applications deadline: see website

Entrants attend auditions in China, Japan, Italy, UK and USA, or submit video applications, for the chance to compete in two concerto stages and a solo recital before an international jury, helmed by artistic director Frank Wibaut. Six pianists will be chosen to play with the RPO across a two-night final in the White Rock Theatre beginning on March 1. First prize is £15,000 and the opportunity to give two concerts with the

RPO plus other engagements in the UK and USA.

hastingsconcertocompetition.co.uk

Kathleen Ferrier Memorial Scholarship Fund Competition

Next competition:

April 24 & 26, 2019

Applications deadline:

February 1, 2019

Held every year, this competition is open to singers of any nationality who have completed at least one year of continuous higher-level study in the UK or Republic of Ireland at a recognised conservatoire or music school and are currently resident in that territory. It's a high-profile list of former prize-winners too, including Karen Cargill, Ben Johnson, Robin Tritschler and pianist James Baillieu. Following auditions in March, the semi-finals and finals take place before a public audience at Wigmore Hall. First prize is £12,500, second is £6000, plus there's the Ferrier Loveday Song Prize of £5000 and an accompanist's prize of £5000, awarded through Help Musicians UK. **ferrierawards.org.uk**

RNCM James Mottram International Piano Competition

Next competition:

November 2020

Applications deadline: see website

This major biennial event offers an all-round learning experience for pianists under the age of 30 from all over the world, mixing opportunities to perform on the concert platform with a series of masterclasses given by a distinguished international jury. The competition final in the RNCM Concert Hall is accompanied by a full orchestra, which for 2018 was the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra under Robert Spano, with the event recorded for broadcast on Classic FM. There's also a first prize of £10,000, and the chance to gain a scholarship to the Royal Northern College of Music.

rncm.ac.uk/jmipc-info/

St Albans International Organ Competition

Next competition: July 8-20, 2019

Applications deadline: March 22, 2019

Open to organists of all nationalities born after July 20, 1986, this competition is part of the St Albans International Organ Festival. Highlights for 2019 include a new commission from UK composer Matthew Martin, and beyond the main rankings the Tournemire Prize for improvisation. There's also the opportunity for competitors to take some particularly nice organs for a spin because beyond the finals on the Harris & Harris organ of St Alban's Cathedral, the semifinal takes place in Christ Church Spitalfields on its restored 1735 Richard Bridge organ. Another draw for ambitious organists will be the fact that the final rounds consist not simply of solo interpretation and improvisation finals, but also a concerto final with St James's Baroque directed by James O'Donnell.

organfestival.com/St-Albans_International_Organ_Festival/2019-competitions.html

Wigmore Hall/Independent Opera International Song Competition

Next competition:

September 7-11, 2019

Applications deadline:

March 15, 2019

This biennial competition is open to singers and pianists from around the world, aged 33 or under, who are keen to embark on significant recital careers. Among the cash prizes for singers are first, second and third prizes of £10,000, £5000 and £2500 respectively. There's also a pianist's prize of £5000. Furthermore, the competition has a seriously high-profile set of jury members, including John Mark Ainsley, Ian Burnside, Bernarda Fink, John Gilhooly, Graham Johnson, Felicity Lott, Thomas Quasthoff and Ailish Tynan. If you can't be there in person, Wigmore Hall will be streaming the semi-finals and finals on its website.

wigmore-hall.org.uk/song-competition

Windsor Festival International String Competition

Next competition:

March 23-29, 2019

Applications deadline:

December 1, 2018

This biennial competition hosted by Windsor Castle, launched in 2008 as a tribute to Yehudi Menuhin, counts among its previous winners the violinists Nathan Meltzer, Jiyoung Lee and Benjamin Baker. The first prize for the 2019 competition includes a concert date for the winner to return to Windsor to play a concerto with the competition's associate orchestra, the Philharmonia. Also on offer is a solo recording opportunity with Champs Hill Records, and a fine contemporary bow. The semi-finals will be live-streamed, and the final will either be live-streamed or available to watch soon afterwards.

windsorfestival.com/international-string-competition

York Early Music International Young Artists Competition

Next competition: July 11-13, 2019

Applications deadline:

January 18, 2019

Based at York's National Centre for Early Music, this biennial period-performance competition takes place as part of York's Early Music Festival and invites applications from instrumental and vocal ensembles comprising two or more musicians whose average age is 32 or under. First prize is a CD recording with Linn Records, £1000 cash and a paid concert at the 2020 York Early Music Festival. The judging panel is one young artists will want to be heard by too, given that it's Elizabeth Kenny, Bart Demuyt of the Alamire Foundation/AMUZ (Antwerp), Barbara Willi (harpsichordist/teacher at the Hague & in Brno), Göttingen Handel Festival director Tobias Wolf, and Philip Hobbs from Linn Records.

yorkcomp.ncem.co.uk

Winning is just the beginning

The Leeds International Piano Competition has been revamped and now boasts live streaming plus label and management deals for the winner. **Simon Broughton** reports from the event



Clear winner: 20-year-old Eric Lu, whose performance of Beethoven's Fourth Concerto showed 'clarity and maturity'

When I was a kid, I really believed in competitions. Perhaps this is something to do with the Asian mentality – I want to be number one,' says Lang Lang, with a twinkle in his eye. 'But over the years, we grow up, and we know that competitions are not just about competing. It's more about learning from each other, exchanging musical ideas and having a platform for you to shine!' Lang Lang is talking in Leeds where he's presenting the prizes at the Leeds International Piano Competition.

Of course, competitions can be controversial. Is the pressure good for artists? How do you rank one pianist against another? Do they produce the right winners?

The Leeds competition, which takes place every three years, was started in 1963 by piano teacher Fanny Waterman who is still very much a presence, aged 98. But although the occasion launched many of today's big names in the early years – Murray Perahia, Mitsuko Uchida and András Schiff among many others – there was a feeling that its strike rate had become less successful. So, for the 19th edition last September, there was a bit of a revamp, following the appointment of new artistic co-directors Adam Gatehouse and Paul Lewis in 2016.

'We took a long hard look at it and felt we needed to make it fit for purpose in the 21st century,' says Gatehouse, who for 14 years led the New Generation Artists scheme at BBC Radio 3. 'One of the first things we agreed was that we had to have it streamed globally, and our partnership with medici.tv is absolutely central to that. Already, we've had over half a million people watching in 130 or 140 countries. Already, this has made a significant impact.'

Other innovations include the first rounds being held in Berlin, Singapore and New York to strengthen the selection of

international pianists; the introduction of chamber music performance in the third round; a CD release of Leeds performances on Warner; and a management contract with Askonas Holt to help longer-term career development.

Co-artistic director and pianist Paul Lewis was one of the first artists selected by Gatehouse (in 1999) for the BBC's Young Generation Artists. 'It might seem rather perverse of me, but I was never a fan of competitions,' he says. 'So when the suggestion was made for me to get involved, I thought, why not make it into something that goes beyond the competition, so that it's about partnerships, collaboration and

connecting with people? The idea is that it can be more than a competition and be of relevance and benefit to the community.'

The partnerships that Gatehouse and Lewis have put in place will bring follow-up concerts to BBC Radio 3 and Wigmore Hall, and performances with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and the Hallé, as well as concert dates in Europe and South Korea organised by Steinway.

'The combination of the local and international was a perfect balance for Warner,' says Patrick Lemanski, Head of Classics at Warner UK. 'At Warner we love the piano, we have fantastic artists on the roster and we like to find and nurture new talent. We've noticed that the most successful sub-genre in streaming classical music is piano – so of course we're interested in new artists [on that instrument].'

In the small print, Warner and Askonas Holt have a clause so that they don't necessarily have to go with the first prizewinner but can choose one of the others if they wish. 'That's totally understandable,' says Lewis. 'The chemistry has to be right. What comes out of the jury vote will come out – there are nine different opinions and angles. If Askonas and Warner feel suited better to one of the other prizewinners, that's fine. It's important they choose who they want to work with and promote.'

The nine Leeds judges are mainly pianists, although violinist Henning Kraggerud is there 'to listen to the musicality and not be distracted by technique' and Gillian Moore CBE is Head of Classical Music at London's Southbank Centre, where the winner will give a solo recital in 2020.

Pianist and jury member Lars Vogt, a Leeds prizewinner in 1990, is also ambivalent about the traditional competition model because opinions are subjective and 'making music is not a sport'. Another pianist on the jury, meanwhile – Sa Chen,

who won prizes at the Leeds, Chopin and Van Cliburn – feels that one of the benefits of Leeds is the sheer quantity of music you are obliged to learn. ‘You can gain a lot of new repertoire and get tremendous experience on the concert platform,’ she says. ‘A competition opens many doors for more people to hear you and to understand you as an artist; it allows you to test yourself to see if you’re ready for a career.’

The range of music you have to learn is also something that’s mentioned by one of the competitors, Aljoša Jurinić from Croatia. ‘Even if you don’t win a prize, all this repertoire is worth having,’ he says. And all the finalists mention the relaxed and friendly nature of the competition. Over 10 days in Leeds, they are all staying at the university and certainly appreciate the supportive atmosphere.

The grand interior of Leeds Town Hall, where the finals took place, has a lively, sympathetic acoustic. The organ is an extravagant backdrop with trumpeting angels and a white rose of Yorkshire between the organ pipes. Draped either side were the flags of 16 nations, from America to China, from the UK to Russia, representing the countries from which the pianists have come. Some of the moralistic slogans on the wall – ‘Honesty is the best Policy’, ‘Trial by Jury’ – seemed particularly appropriate as the judges sat in the first row of the balcony to hear the pianists go through their paces in concertos by Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann and Prokofiev, each of them playing a different work, all backed by the Hallé Orchestra conducted by Edward Gardner.

Second prize went to Mario Häring, 28, from Germany. His performance of Beethoven’s First Concerto was beautifully shaped, but most striking for the way he engaged with and listened to the orchestra when he wasn’t playing. It’s no

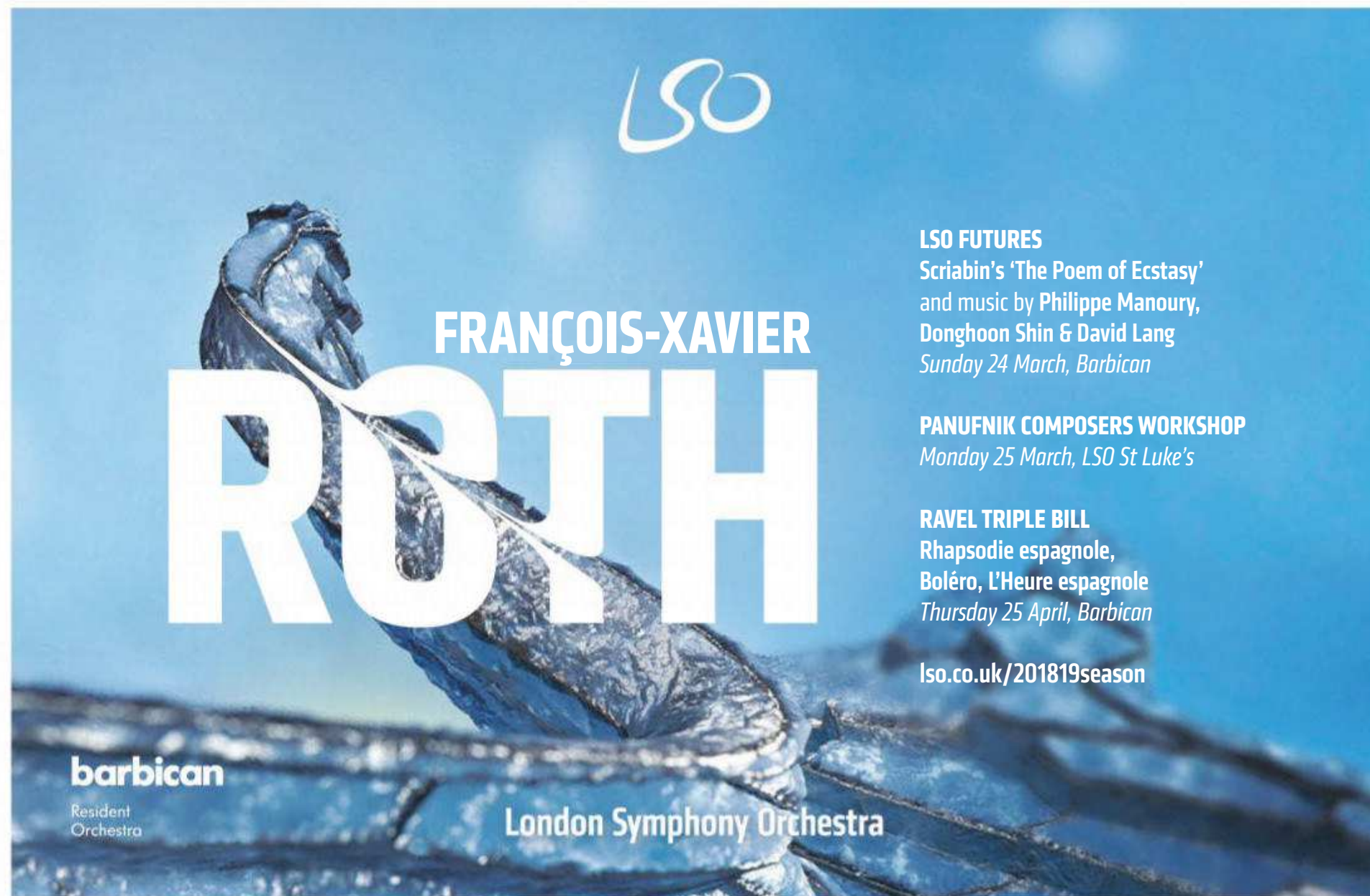
surprise he also won the Yaltah Menuhin Award for the chamber music performance.

First prizewinner was Eric Lu, 20 – the youngest of all the 68 competitors selected to take part in the competition. He played Beethoven’s Fourth Concerto with an astonishing clarity and maturity, conjuring a rapt stillness in the hall. The competition won’t reveal how the jury voted, but suggestions are that Lu was the clear winner. It just goes to show that it’s not age or experience that counts, but some special artistry alongside a formidable technique. Askonas Holt and Warner confirmed that they were delighted to work with Lu, also a prizewinner at the Chopin International Competition in 2015.

Just six days after the final, Warner put out a single from Lu’s full Leeds album (which itself was released November 2), which includes that prizewinning performance of the Beethoven Fourth plus Chopin’s Ballade No 4 and Piano Sonata No 2 recorded from earlier rounds. It was the first in a series of competition releases Warner has planned.

Surprisingly, Eric Lu admitted to me afterwards that this was only the second time he’d played the concerto. He did it for the first time in a competition in China in March. Talking about his prizewinning performance in Leeds, he said: ‘I actually felt not too nervous when I started the Beethoven. I fell in love with the music. That’s what I was thinking to myself as I was playing it.’

Adam Gatehouse and Paul Lewis certainly seem happy with the choice. ‘It’s not all about him. There’s no ego,’ says Lewis. ‘It’s all about the music and that’s why he won the Leeds International Piano Competition.’ Whether he’ll become another star in the piano firmament only time will tell, but the buzz seems good. **G**



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Donghoon Shin & David Lang
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PANUFNIK COMPOSERS WORKSHOP
Monday 25 March, LSO St Luke's

RAVEL TRIPLE BILL
Rhapsodie espagnole,
Boléro, L'Heure espagnole
Thursday 25 April, Barbican

lso.co.uk/201819season

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EUROPE GUIDE



Jiyeon Lee, winner of the 2016 Carl Nielsen Competition; along with fellow winner Liya Petrova, she has featured as a One to Watch

ARD International Music Competition

Next competition:

September 2-20, 2019

Applications deadline:

March 31, 2019

Based in Munich, this is Germany's largest classical music competition, with a starry roster of high-profile previous winners that include Jessye Norman, Christoph Eschenbach and Mitsuko Uchida. It's open to musicians aged between 17 and 29 who are ready to launch an international career. Disciplines rotate from year to year, but for 2019 the focus is on cello, bassoon, clarinet and percussion. The judges are a high-profile bunch too, including Milan Turkovic and Rachel Gough (bassoon), Li Biao and Gert Mortensen (percussion), Shirley Brill and Eric Hoeprich (clarinet), and Ophélie Gaillard and Pieter Wispelwey (cello). Each category's list of cash awards is topped by a €10,000 first prize, and you can watch it even if you're not in Germany, as the semi-finals, finals and prizewinners' concerts are streamed live on the competition's website.

ard-musikwettbewerb.de

Bartók World Competition and Festival

Next competition:

September 7-15, 2019

Applications deadline: see website

This new Hungarian competition, run by The Liszt Academy, was launched in 2017 to mark the 135th anniversary of Bartók's death. It is structured in a six-year cycle around the most characteristic strands of Bartók's oeuvre – piano, violin, chamber music and composition – with the instrumental competitions taking place biennially, punctuated by composer competitions that relate to the forthcoming instrumental category. For 2019, piano year, the repertoire list includes the winning piece from the 2018 composition competition, written in the spirit of Bartók.

bartokworldcompetition.hu

Besançon International Competition for Young Conductors

Next competition:

September 2019

Applications deadline: see website

This French biennial conducting competition puts its applicants through their paces, with a repertoire spanning Classical,

Romantic, 20th-century and contemporary, plus oratorio and opera. It's open to aspiring professional conductors under 35, whatever their training or experience so far; no previous diploma is required. In 2017 it was won by a Brit, Ben Glassberg. After preliminaries held in Beijing, Montreal, Berlin and Besançon, 20 candidates are selected for the orchestral rounds in Besançon in September, competing for a grand prize of €12,000 and advice and coaching from Aimée Paret.

festival-besancon.com

Bradshaw & Buono International Competition

Winners announced: May 7, 2019

Applications deadline:

April 8, 2019

In an unusual format, this international competition, which is open to pianists and singers, has no live rounds. Instead it's all done by video selection. However, the first prize is one well worth having: the winning pianist or singer will be offered a solo recital debut at none other than Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall. **alexanderbuono.com/piano-competition**

International Chamber Music Competition 'Franz Schubert and Modern Music'

Next competition:

February 6-15, 2021

Applications deadline: see website

Established by the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz in 1989, this triennial competition invites young ensembles from all over the world to compete within a multi-day festival of chamber music which has around €100,000 of prize money on offer.

schubert.kug.ac.at/competition

Carl Nielsen International Competition

Next competition:

March 21-31, 2019

Applications deadline: now closed

The 2016 joint winners of this Odense-based competition – violinists Jiyeon Lee and Liya Petrova – have both been Ones to Watch in our pages in recent months with their recent recordings, so this is certainly a competition whose winners are worth keeping an eye on. It's all change this year too, because while traditionally this competition has rotated its disciplines annually, in 2019 it will for the first time run its violin, clarinet and flute competitions concurrently. The judges are a seriously high-profile group too: Nikolaj Znaider is competition president, alongside artistic advisors Martin Fröst and Emmanuel Pahud. First prize is €12,000 cash and a recording deal with Orchid Classics worth €13,000, plus concert appearances with up to 10 orchestras and festivals, including the Odense Symphony Orchestra, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra and the Oslo Philharmonic. Those who can't attend the competition in person can catch it on **medici.tv** and also on the competition's own website.

carlnielsencompetition.com

Clara Haskil Piano Competition**Next competition:****August 24-30, 2019****Applications deadline:****April 10, 2019**

Open to pianists born after December 31, 1991, this competition is hosted in the Swiss town of Vevey, where pianist Clara Haskil lived from 1942 until her death. The jury is an impressive one, presided over by Christian Zacharias, with Aleksandar Madžar also among their number. The competition makes one main award, a cash prize of CHF 25,000 and various concert engagements. The other finalists receive CHF 5,000 each. Other awards include an audience prize and one for best interpretation of the competition commission, which for 2019 is by Thierry Eschaich, who consequently also sits on the jury. The finals, with orchestra, are broadcast by Radio Télévision Suisse on Espace 2.

clara-haskil.ch**Concours International de Piano****Next competition: June 8-15, 2019****Applications deadline:****April 20, 2019**

The Salle Malesherbes, set amid the splendour of Maisons Laffitte, just outside Paris, is the atmospheric venue for this international piano competition whose honorary president is Anne Queffélec. Unusually, the competition has a category for amateur pianists with a minimum age of 25, as well as for professional concert artists aged 32 or under. The jury includes Isabelle Laffite, and the prizes on offer are generous, with €7600 in cash, 11 recitals including one with an orchestra in Hungary, one masterclass and one musical training award.

concoursdepiano.com**Epinal International Piano Competition****Next competition:****March 22-31, 2019****Applications deadline:****February 15, 2019**

Open to pianists born between 1989 and 2004, this biennial French competition awards cash prizes, including, for first place, €7000 along with concert engagements at festivals such as Concerts Classiques d'Épinal and Rencontres Internationales de Musique de Mirecourt.

concours-international-piano-epinal.org**Enescu Competition****Next competition: 2020****Applications deadline: see website**

Open to violinists, pianists, cellists and composers born on or after August 1, 1985, this biennial competition is part of the George Enescu International Festival, the largest international cultural event organised in Romania, and offers cash prizes totalling €115,000.

festivalenescu.ro/en/competition-2018**Ferruccio Busoni International Piano Competition****Next competition:****August 27 - September 6, 2021****Applications deadline:****May 1, 2020, for the 2021****competition preselections**

Part of the South Tyrolean Bolzano Festival Bozen, this competition, which is open to pianists aged under 30, includes Martha Argerich and Alfred Brendel among its previous laureates. It operates in two-year cycles, the first featuring the pre-selections for 100 pianists, and the second for which 27 pianists have been shortlisted. It's a finalists' year in 2019, which will culminate in a grand final for the last three candidates. They will perform concertos with the Haydn Orchestra in the Civic Theatre (Teatro Comunale), competing for generous cash prizes including a first of €22,000. The finals will be live-streamed on the competition's website, Facebook page and dedicated YouTube channel.

concorsobusoni.it;
facebook.com/Busoni.Piano.
Competition;
youtube.com/user/BusoniInternational/

Geneva International Music Competition**Next competition:****November 7-21, 2019****Applications deadline:****May 2, 2019**

Founded in 1939, this competition's disciplines rotate annually, and its list of distinguished laureates includes Martha Argerich, Emmanuel Pahud and Georg Solti. The 2019 competition is for percussionists and composers. Members of the percussion jury, presided over by Philippe Spiesser, include Daniel Druckman and Fritz Hauser, and finalists have a chance to perform with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande under Julien Leroy. Composers meanwhile must write a work for oboe and ensemble, and they will be judged by a jury presided over by Kaija Saariaho and including Julian Anderson. The winning composition carries a CHF 15,000 cash prize and will be performed at the 2020 oboe competition. Radio Télévision Suisse will broadcast both finals live on Espace 2. There are also plans to stream the finals and possibly other percussion events.

concoursgeneve.ch**'Giorgos Thymis' International Piano Competition****Next competition:****January 10-18, 2019****Applications deadline:****December 15, 2018**

Open to pianists of any nation born on or after January 10, 1986, this Thessaloniki competition offers a top prize of €5000 along with a concerto engagement with the Thessaloniki State Symphony Orchestra and solo recitals in the Thessaloniki Concert Hall and one other Greek city, plus another European country. Among the judging panel are Cyprien Katsaris and Georgios Konstantinidis.

thymiscompetition.gr**International Jeunesses Musicales Competition Belgrade****Next competition:****March 21-30, 2019****Applications deadline:****January 31, 2019**

Held annually since 1971, this Belgrade competition hosted by the Ilija Milosavljević Kolarac Foundation rotates disciplines between flute, guitar, piano and cello. It's the turn of pianists in 2019, inviting musicians aged less than 35 at the competition's beginning to compete for some major cash prizes.

muzicka-omladina.org**International Joseph Joachim Chamber Music Competition****Next competition:****March 31 - April 7, 2019****Applications deadline:****January 12, 2019**

Hosted by Weimar's Liszt University, in 2019 this triennial competition is open to string trios and string quartets, and piano trios and piano quartets, whose members were born after April 1, 1979. Even the competition's most recent laureates have enjoyed steadily rising careers; 2016's winners, the Aris Quartet, the Amatis Piano Trio and Quartet Berlin-Tokyo, are a case in point. This year the jury, which is presided over by the university's professor of violin Anne-Kathrin Lindig, will be awarding various prizes including a top award of €10,000. The second and final rounds will be live streamed on the website.

hfm-weimar.de/joachim**International Vocal Competition 's-Hertogenbosch****Next Competition:****November 18-24, 2019****Applications open January 2019**

Founded in 1954, this is the Netherlands' only classical vocal competition. It encompasses oratorio and art song as well as opera, with an additional focus on contemporary music. For the 2019 competition, Lieder also comes to the forefront.

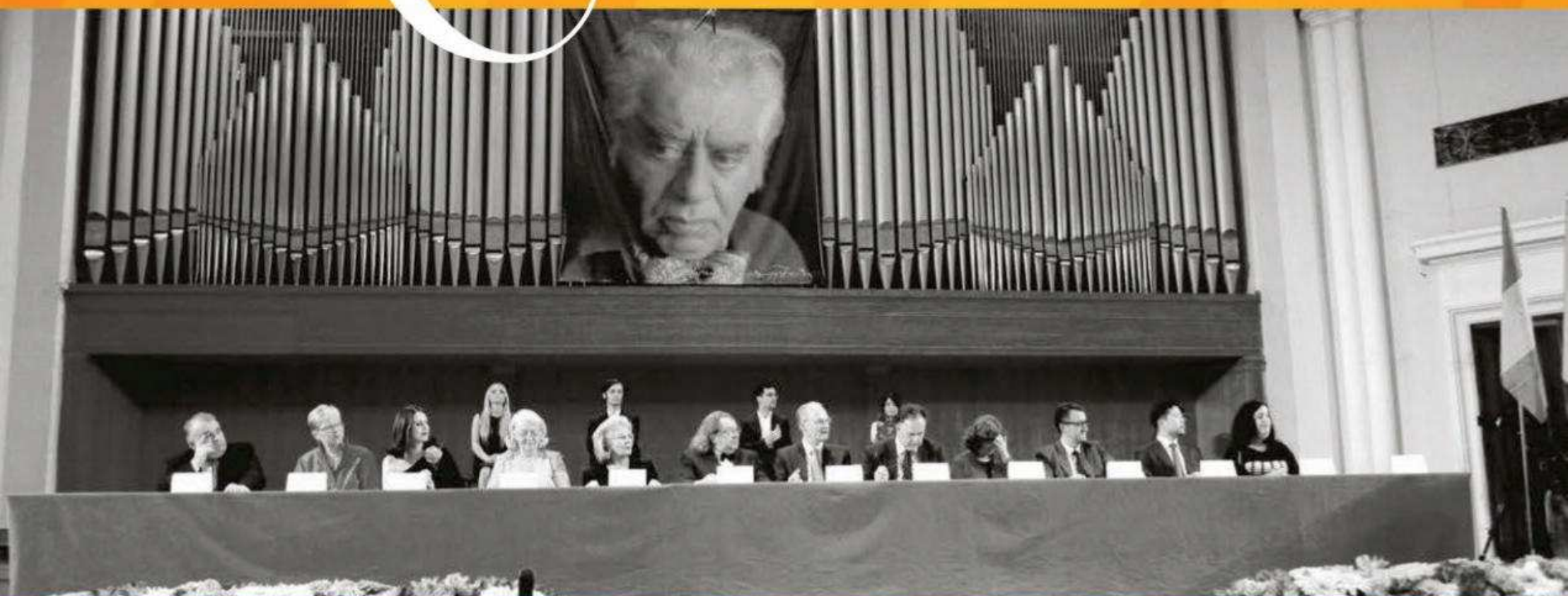
ivc.nu**Khachaturian International Competition****Next competition: June 6-14, 2019****Applications deadline:****April 25, 2019**



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68th ARD International Music Competition Munich

September 2 to 20, 2019



István Várdai
1st prize 2014



Sophie Dartigalongue
2nd prize 2013



Simone Rubino
1st prize 2014



Annelien van Wauwe
2nd prize 2012

Application
deadline:
March 31, 2019

Violoncello Bassoon Clarinet Percussion

This is an annual Yerevan-based competition whose disciplines rotate annually between piano, violin, cello, voice and conducting. Pianists aged between 16 and 32 and of all nationalities are the focus for 2019 competition. The top cash award, in local currency, is the equivalent of US\$15,000, plus concert opportunities. Second is the equivalent of US\$10,000, and third US\$5,000.

khachaturian-competition.com

Liszt Competition

Next competition:

March 16-28, 2020

Applications deadline: 1 May 2019

The next edition of this Utrecht-based piano competition-festival at TivoliVrendenburg is for the first time centred around a theme: 'Beethoven seen through the eyes of Liszt'. The three finalists will be accompanied by the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and judged by an international panel that includes Idil Biret and Leslie Howard. International selection rounds take place in September 2019 in New York, Moscow, Tbilisi, Beijing, Hong Kong and Utrecht. **liszt.nl**

Livorno Piano Competition

January 21-26, 2019

Applications deadline:

December 10, 2019

This, the third edition of the competition, is divided into two strands. First, there's the Young Livorno Piano Competition, which has six age categories. The 'Premio Enrico Galletta' prize is for pianists born after January 1, 1997, for which there is a top award of €500. The adult Livorno Piano Competition, meanwhile, is open to pianists born after January 1, 1986, and the prizes on offer include a first of €3000 plus concerts, a second and third prize of €1500 and €1000 respectively, plus special prizes. Chairing the jury is Daniel Rivera, and he's joined by Peter Grote, Wojciech Świtala, Mariangela Vacatello and artistic director Carlo Palese. The final will be



The winner of the 2016 Mahler Competition, Kahchun Wong; previous winners include Gustavo Dudamel and Lahav Shani

streamed by DueErre Produzioni Multimediali
livornopianocompetition.com

Lyons International Chamber Music Competition

Next competition: April 23-27, 2019

Applications deadline:

January 15, 2019

Established in 2004, this chamber music competition focuses on a different instrumental grouping each year. It's the turn of voice and piano in 2019; artists aged 33 and under can enter, to compete for €26,000 of cash prizes plus recital engagements and a residency with concerts as part of the Belle Saison programme. There are big names on the jury, including baritone Andreas Schmidt, soprano Felicity Lott and pianist Charles Spencer. The final is broadcast on France Musique, while the rounds are live-streamed on NoMadMusic. **cimcl.fr**

Mahler Competition

Next competition: 2020

Applications deadline: see website

When previous winners of the Bamberg Symphony's conducting competition include Gustavo Dudamel and Lahav Shani, it's definitely one worth taking notice of. However while this major competition usually

takes place triennially, it has just been put back a further year to 2020. So keep checking the website address for updates.

bamberger-symphoniker.de/en.html

Michele Pittaluga International Guitar Competition

Next competition: September 2019

Applications deadline: see website

This important classical guitar competition, which takes place annually in Alessandria, Piedmont, marks its 52nd edition in 2019. The first prize is €10,000, a concert tour and a recording contract with Naxos. **pittaluga.org**

Neue Stimmen

Next competition:

October 19-27, 2019

Applications deadline:

March 15, 2019

Held biennially with a jury chaired by Vienna State Opera director Dominique Meyer, this Gütersloh-based singing competition is open to all female singers aged 28 and younger, and all male singers aged 30 and under. Both categories carry first prizes of €15,000, plus opportunities for concerts, coaching and career contacts. Second prizes are €10,000 and third €5000. There's also an audience award.

The semi-final (held on October 24) and the final concert (on October 26) will both be live-streamed on the competition website. **neue-stimmen.de**

International Paderewski Piano Competition

Next competition:

November 10-24, 2019

Applications deadline:

April 20, 2019

Open to pianists born between 1987 and 2003, this Polish competition was first launched to commemorate the pianist, composer and politician Ignacy Jan Paderewski. It is under the joint organisation of the Paderewski Music Association, the Feliks Nowowiejski Music Academy and Bydgoszcz's IJ Paderewski Philharmonic. Preliminary auditions take place in May 2019, in Vienna, New York, Moscow, Warsaw, Brescia, Shanghai, Tokyo and Seoul. The jury, chaired by the competition's artistic director Piotr Paleczny, includes Lilian Barretto and Michel Beroff. Crowning what is a long list of cash awards is a first prize of €30,000. The competition will also be streamed via its website. **paderewskicompetition.pl**



The South Korean tenor Seung Ju Bahg wins the Queen Sonja International Music Competition in Norway in August 2017

Premio Paolo Borciani

Next competition: June 2020

Applications deadline: see website

Taking place triennially at Teatro Municipale Valli in Reggio Emilia, this international string quartet competition has a starry roster of previous winners including the Keller Quartet (1990), Artemis Quartet (2007), and Pavel Haas Quartet (2005). The first prize is a real launching pad for a quartet's career, as it comprises a long tour encompassing Europe, the United States and Japan. Another interesting feature of this competition is that each year its set repertoire includes a new work, either especially commissioned or recently written, from one of the world's most esteemed and valued living composers, for example, Thomas Adès in 2014 and Luciano Berio in 1997.

www.iteatri.re.it

Princess Astrid International Competition

Next competition: 2020

Applications deadline: see website

Established in 1952, this biennial competition hosted by Trondheim Symphony Orchestra rotates between violin and conducting, with the violin being the focus for 2020.

tso.no

Queen Elisabeth Competition

Next competition:

April 29 - May 25, 2019

Applications deadline:

December 5, 2018

Disciplines of this annual competition rotate between pianists, violinists, singers and cellists. The 2019 competition (the first under one of two new jury chairmen, Gilles Ledure) is for violinists, and those who make it to the final will be performing in the Palais des Beaux-Arts with the Belgian National Orchestra under Hugh Wolff. There is a long list of awards: six official prized rankings including the top Queen Mathilde International Grand Prize of €25,000, and also cash prizes for the six unranked laureates. There are remote viewing options too: at the time of going to press there are plans to live-stream the semi-final and final on demand on the competition website, thanks to Proximus. Keep checking the website for complete streaming and broadcasting information.

quimc.be

The Queen Sonja International Music Competition, Norway

Next competition:

August 13-23, 2019

Applications deadline: April 1, 2019

One of the world's leading voice competitions, this takes place biennially and is open to singers born after January 1, 1987. Recent winners include soprano Lise Davidsen (2015), who is newly signed to Decca and who of course was *Gramophone's* 2018 Young Artist of the Year. The grand final takes place at the Norwegian National Opera Orchestra, with the singers accompanied by its orchestra. The judging panel chaired by Stockholm Royal Opera CEO and artistic director Birgitta Svendén includes the future (2022) opera director at Theater an der Wien Stefan Herheim, and the list of prizes includes a cash first prize of €50,000. Those not able to get to Norway can watch the preliminary rounds, semi-final and masterclasses on the competition's YouTube channel, and the final concert will be broadcast by the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK).

qsimc.no

Tchaikovsky Competition

Next competition: June 2019

Applications deadline: see website

As we go to press, the details of this major quadrennial competition are yet to be announced. However what we

do know is that it's going to be bigger than ever. Unlike other competitions that rotate disciplines, the Tchaikovsky is more like a classical Olympic Games, encompassing all the major musical categories. Traditionally that's been piano, voice, violin and cello, but for 2019 winds are being added to proceedings for the very first time. Plus – perhaps inspired by the football World Cup – the competition in 2019 will see new towns and venues added to the traditional Moscow and St Petersburg. Valery Gergiev will preside over the main jury, and you'll be able to watch it all on medici.tv.

tchaikovskycompetition.com

Tibor Varga International Violin Competition Sion Valais, Switzerland

Next competition:

August 18-24, 2019

Applications deadline:

April 15, 2019

This biennial competition offers finalists a chance to perform with the Chamber Orchestra of Lausanne. The jury, chaired by Georges Starobinski, includes among its number Pavel Vernikov and Qian Zhou.

sion-concours.ch/

Top of the World Piano Competition

Next competition:

June 15-21, 2019

Applications deadline:

February 15, 2019

Open to pianists of all nationalities aged between 17 and 35, this competition takes place in Norway's midnight sun city, Tromsø. It's biennial, but the off-years are by no means quiet, because the competition organises a youth masterclass with the previous year's competition winner, to which the Barent region's great piano talents aged between 12-17 are invited. The prizes offered this year include a first of €30,000. cash. Among the jury are Achille Gallo, Diane Anderson, Einer Steen-Nøkleberg and Janina Fialkowska.

topoftheworld.no



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www.unisa.ac.za/musicfoundation

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Seungju Mario Bahg,
First Prize winner 2017

www.qsimc.no

Johan Dalene,
2017 First Prize.

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July 18-26

For ages 13-18

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Application deadline: May 7, 2019

More information at www.oberlin.edu/cooper

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Bokyoung Byun won second prize in the 2018 Guitar Foundation of America ICAC

Banff International String Quartet Competition

Next competition:

August 26 - September 1, 2019

Applications deadline:

March 1, 2019

This triennial competition is open to quartets of all nationalities whose members are under the age of 35 at the time of the competition; previous winners include the Dover Quartet. The 10 quartets that make it through are battling it out for over C\$150,000 in cash and prizes for the top three; and the seven runners-up also receive a career development grant. Check the website for updates on the live-streaming of each round.

banffcentre.ca

Cleveland International Piano Competition

Next competition: spring 2020

Applications deadline: see website

The biennial CIPC has a main category for artists aged 18-30, and a junior category for those aged 12-17. The main category prize includes a cash award of US\$75,000, a Carnegie Hall recital debut, a recording on the Steinway & Sons label, and the launch of a US concert career. Plus, there's a festival built around the competition, with performances and symposia at the Cleveland Museum of Art and Severance Hall.

clevelandpiano.org

The Cliburn

Next competition: 2021

Applications deadline: see website

Held every four years in Fort Worth, Texas, the competition's recent laureates include Beatrice Rana, who took silver in 2013.

cliburn.org

Cooper International Competition 2019

Next competition: July 18-26, 2019

Applications deadline: May 7, 2019

The 2019 edition welcomes applicants aged between 13 and 18 to compete for the Violin Prize. Awards of up to \$20,000 are on offer, as well as a full four-year scholarship to Oberlin Conservatory. Tickets are available for the final with the Cleveland Orchestra at Severance Hall; alternatively, WCLV 104.9 FM is broadcasting and streaming the competition.

oberlin.edu/cooper/

Guitar Foundation of America International Convention and Competitions

Next competition:

June 17-22, 2019

Applications deadline: May 1, 2019

The Guitar Foundation of America's annual international convention features three competitions each year: the GFA International Youth Competition, the GFA International Ensemble Competition and the largest of the three, the International Concert Artist Competition

(ICAC), open to guitarists aged 18 or over by June 1, 2020.

The next edition will have all its rounds live-streamed. The top prize includes US\$10,000, a Naxos recording, and a GFA-sponsored concert tour including approximately 50 concerts throughout the US, Canada and Mexico

guitarfoundation.org

Menuhin Competition

Next competition:

May 14-24, 2020

Applications deadline: see website

Previous winners of this biennial violin competition include Ray Chen (2008) and Stephen Waarts (2014). It's open to violinists of all nationalities under the age of 22 (senior section) and 16 years old (junior section) as of April 22, 2018, and is held in a different city each time. For 2020, the destination is Richmond, Virginia.

menuhincompetition.org

Concours Musical International de Montréal

Next competition:

May 26 - June 6, 2019

Applications deadline:

November 15, 2018

Piano: May 4-14, 2020

Held annually since 2002, the 2019 edition is open to violinists. The jury, presided over by Zarin Mehta, includes Mihaela Martin, Pierre Amoyal and Kim Kashkashian. Prizes include a first of C\$30,000, a C\$50,000 career development grant, a C\$20,000 instrument crafted by Quebec makers, and a C\$2500 artist residency at Canada's Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. The Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal will accompany the final rounds, under the baton - for the first time - of Alexander Shelley, music director of the National Arts Center Orchestra. All rounds of the competition will be streamed live and then made available on demand.

concoursmontreal.ca/en/the-competitions/violin/

Orleans Concours International

Next competition: 2020

Applications deadline: see website

This piano competition alternates annually between the main edition in even-numbered years, and the 'Brin d'herbe' competition for pianists aged six to 18, next held in April 2019.

oci-piano.com

Osaka Chamber Music Competition

Next competition: 2020

Applications deadline: see website

An international chamber competition open to string quartets and wind ensembles, this triennial event was first held in 1993 and carries cash prizes amounting to millions of yen. Check the competition website in the spring for more details (including application deadline).

jcmf.or.jp

The Alice and Eleonore Schoenfeld International String Competition

Next competition: see website

Applications deadline: see website

Held in Harbin, China, this international competition has three categories: violin, cello, and chamber groups divided into piano trio, piano quartet and string quartet. Violinists and cellists compete for a top prize of US\$30,000, while chamber groups stand to win US\$20,000.

schoenfeldcompetition.com

Unisa 14th International Piano Competition

Next competition:

January 20 - February 1, 2020

Applications deadline:

August 2, 2019

This Pretoria-based international piano competition rotates between piano, voice, strings and wind, and is unusual for having categories for both classical and jazz styles. It also covers the costs for all invited candidates, from travel and accommodation through to means and practice facilities.

unisa.ac.za

Critics' Choice 2018

Our critics each choose a favourite recording from the past 12 months. If you're after the perfect gift guide for Christmas, look no further!

Mike Ashman

**'Destination
Rachmaninov -
Departure'**

**Daniil Trifonov *pf* The
Philadelphia Orchestra /
Yannick Nézet-Séguin**
DG ④ 483 5335GH (11/18)

Rachmaninov in Philadelphia. It could have been Pristine's ideal remastering of the 'originals' of the composer playing his Second Piano Concerto there but Daniil Trifonov and Yannick Nézet-Séguin in the Second and Fourth Concertos newly evoke memories of those iconic recordings under Stokowski.



Andrew Achenbach

**Vaughan Williams *A Sea Symphony*
Soloists; BBC Symphony Chorus
and Orchestra / Martyn Brabbins**
Hyperion ④ CDA68245 (10/18)



Martyn Brabbins presides over a glorious account of *A Sea Symphony*, consistently nourishing in its strength of purpose and

selfless musicality. Magnificent work from the BBC Symphony Chorus and Orchestra, fresh-sounding vocal soloists and superlative production-values boost the strong claims of a release that is sure to give lasting pleasure.

Tim Ashley

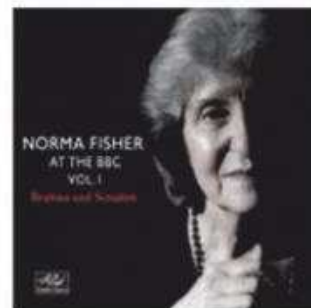
**'Siface' 'L'amor castrato'
Filippo Mineccia *countertenor*
Nereydas / Javier Ulises Illán**
Glossa ④ GCD923514 (7/18)



No disc has given me more pleasure this year than Filippo Mineccia's exceptional recital of music associated with the 17th-century castrato Siface, a carefully crafted programme that embraces both the sacred and the profane, sung with often breathtaking poise and sensuality. It's an astonishingly beautiful recording and quite wonderfully done.

Michelle Assay

**'Norma Fisher at the BBC, Vol 1'
Norma Fisher *pf***
Sonetto Classics ④ SONCLA003 (7/18)



Easily the highlight of my first year as a *Gramophone* reviewer was Norma Fisher's BBC recordings of Brahms and Scriabin, not only for their historic performance

but also for their dignity, integrity and clarity which shine through the transfers (some from private reel-to-reel recordings), auguring very well for promised future instalments.

Alexandra Coghlan

'Venezia Millenaria'

Hespèrion XXI;

Le Concert des Nations / Jordi Savall

Alia Vox (F) (2) AVSA9925 (4/18)

For sheer opulence, generosity and breadth of repertoire, Jordi Savall's 'Venezia Millenaria' blows the competition away this year. This journey through 1000 years of Venetian history takes in everything from popular songs and ancient chants to dances and sacred polyphony – a world in magnificent musical microcosm.



Richard Bratby

Heuberger Der Opernball

Soloists; Chorus of Opera Graz;

Graz Philharmonic Orchestra / Marius Burkert

CPO (F) (2) 555 070-2 (6/18)



I had to double-check, but yes, this really is the first complete modern recording of Richard Heuberger's delicious (and influential) 1898 operetta: the

'missing link' between Johann Strauss and Lehár. With an engaging ensemble cast and lightly-worn Viennese style from Marius Burkert, it's three acts of quite irresistible charm.

Jed Distler

George Szell – The Complete Columbia Album Collection

Sony Classical (S) (106 discs)

88985 47185-2 (11/18)



Beyond question, George Szell was the greatest 20th-century conductor, and nearly all of his Cleveland

recordings are reference versions that represent a masterclass in orchestral transparency, utter clarity, stylish intelligence, chamber-like interaction between sections, unerring taste, and, yes, heart. Sony's long-awaited complete Szell edition belongs in every serious collection.

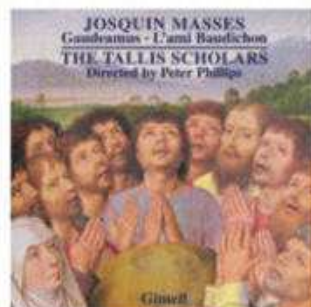
Edward Breen

Josquin Missa Gaudeamus.

Missa L'ami Baudichon

The Tallis Scholars / Peter Phillips

Gimell (F) CDGIM050 (11/18)



I am a long-time admirer of The Tallis Scholars, and their clean, purposeful sound is often my touchstone for Renaissance polyphony. With this

latest release in their grand survey of Josquin's masses they sing with elegant poise while responding to the extraordinary intricacy and expressivity of Josquin's textures.

Adrian Edwards

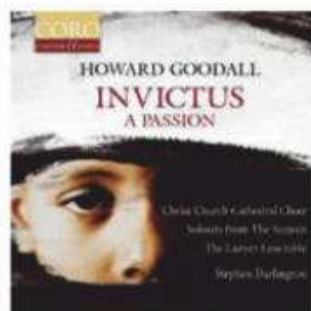
H Goodall Invictus: A Passion

Kirsty Hopkins *sop* **Mark Dobell** *ten*

Christ Church Cathedral Choir;

Lanyer Ensemble / Stephen Darlington

Coro Connections (F) COR16165 (10/18)



Howard Goodall brings an interesting contemporary slant in his choice of texts, old and new, to illuminate the familiar story of Christ's Passion. Kirsty Hopkins and Mark Dobell are his star soloists.

Rob Cowan

Rachmaninov Symphonic Dances, etc

Sergey Rachmaninov *pf*

Marston mono (F) (3) 53022-2 (10/18)



Old recordings rarely make the headlines but, by allowing us to eavesdrop on Rachmaninov demonstrating his *Symphonic Dances* to Eugene Ormandy,

Ward Marston has done just that. This three-CD Rachmaninov set also includes magnificent first-release orchestral performances under Mitropoulos and Ormandy. No historical release in the last 20 years can compare with it.

Richard Fairman

Brahms Four Symphonies

Scottish Chamber Orchestra / Robin Ticciati

Linn (F) (2) CKD601 (4/18)

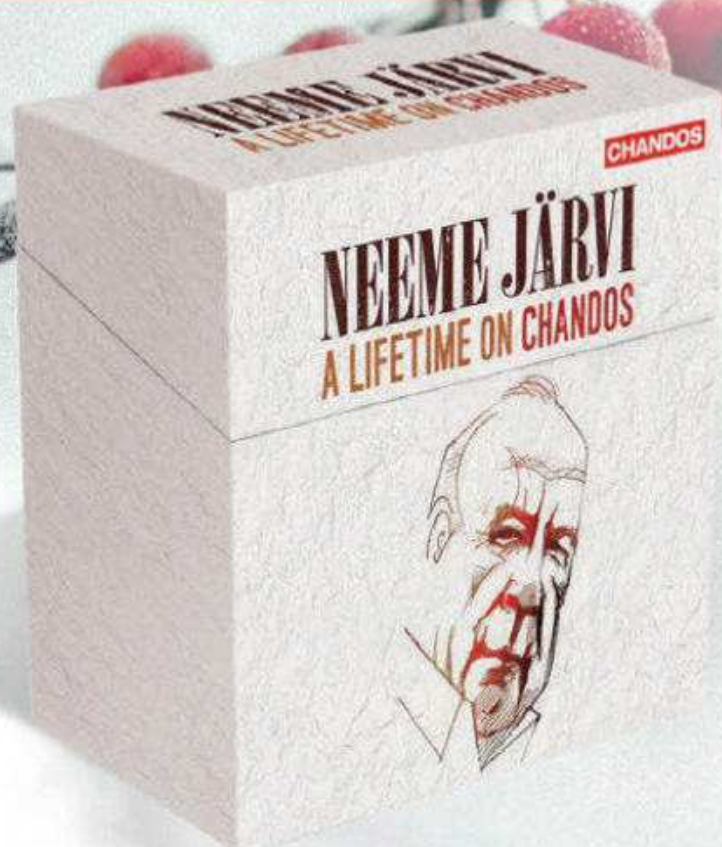


Some recordings intoxicate the senses, simply because they have so much to offer. The way in which every detail of this music has been honed and

perfected by Ticciati's trusted players in the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and then absorbed into a lyrical, affectionate whole, is endlessly fascinating. This has to be, as far as I'm concerned, the most beguiling small-orchestra Brahms yet.

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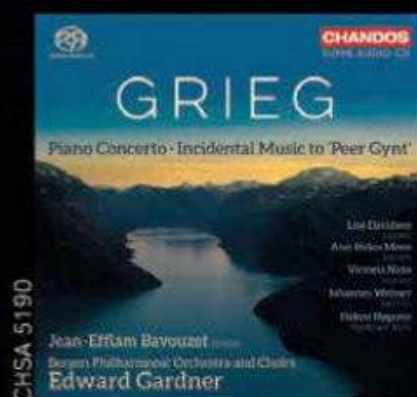
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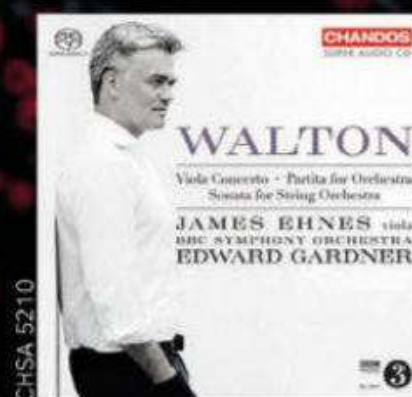
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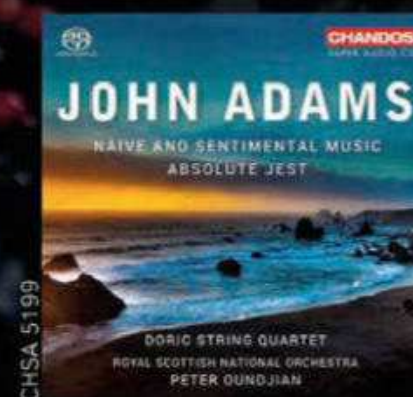
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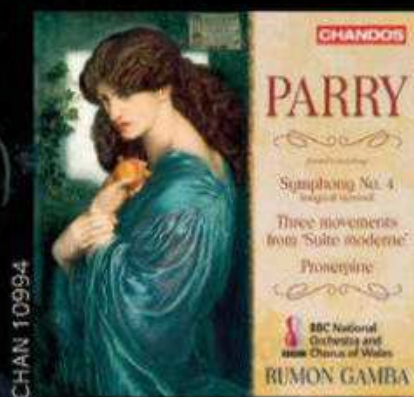
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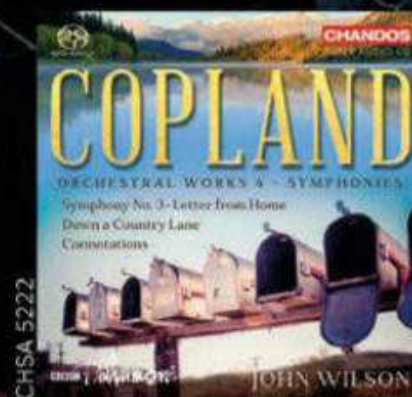
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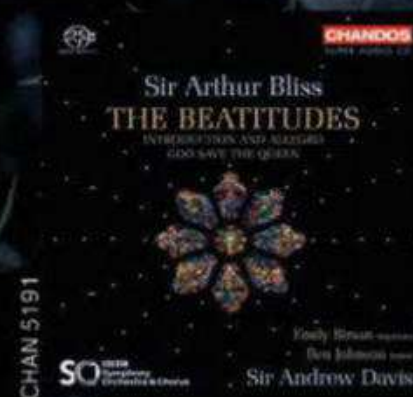
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David Fallows

Dufay 'The Dufay Spectacle'
Gothic Voices
 Linn ⑤ CKD568 (7/18)



My treat of the year was definitely the return of Gothic Voices with a new recording of songs and motets by Dufay. Not just beautifully presented and

assembled with originality and intelligence, this recording features performances that throw new light on this music.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

Bach Cantatas
Sols; Ricercar Consort / Philippe Pierlot
 Mirare ⑤ MIR332 (6/18)



The Ricercars deliver a special trio of cantatas of remarkable thematic beauty and cohesion, each offering a rich autobiographical strain – known and

unknown. These irresistible performances remind us how a top-drawer and intensely communicative ensemble can delve as deeply as ever into Bach's most exquisite conceits of death and consolation.

David Fanning

Debussy Préludes, Book 2. La mer
Alexander Melnikov pf
 Harmonia Mundi ⑤ HMM90 2302 (8/18)

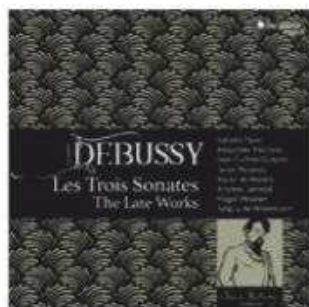


The revelation of my year has been Debussy from Alexander Melnikov: *Préludes*, Book 2, and *La mer* with Olga Pashchenko – on an 1855 Érard.

I'm not a fully paid-up early-instrument fan, but I found the range of attacks and colours conjured here idiomatic and breathtaking.

Charlotte Gardner

Debussy 'Les trois sonates - The Late Works'
Various soloists
 Harmonia Mundi ⑤ HMM90 2303 (11/18)



Of all the new treasures Debussy Year brought to the recordings world, this programme from an international complement of some of HM's most

thoughtful stars was, to my ears, 'the one'. Each of the three late sonatas feels like a benchmark reading, and the piano solos between pull it all seamlessly together. Profound, intelligent, moving – I wouldn't be without it.

Fabrice Fitch

Dufay 'The Dufay Spectacle'
Gothic Voices
 Linn ⑤ CKD568 (7/18)

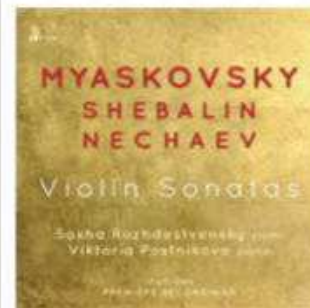


Dufay and the Gothic Voices? Thirty years ago this would have been a dream ticket, so it's a pleasure to hear them roll back the years with this – particularly since

new opportunities to hear 15th-century songs are so thin on the ground these days. A welcome renaissance indeed.

David Gutman

Myaskovsky. Nechaev. Shebalin
Violin Sonatas
Sasha Rozhdestvensky vn Viktoria Postnikova pf First Hand ⑤ FHR57 (A/18)



The death of Rozhdestvensky last June turned this sympathetic collection of Soviet violin sonatas into an unintended memorial to the great conductor

and the era of cultural contradiction he negotiated with such skill and insight. The protagonists are his wife and son and the music quietly eloquent, without magniloquence.

Andrew Farach-Colton

Prokofiev Violin Sonatas Nos 1 and 2
Alexandra Conunova vn Michail Lifits pf
 Aparté ⑤ AP171 (8/18)

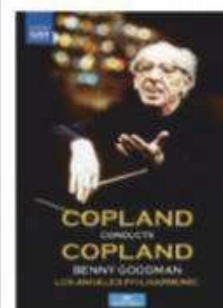
It's an especial pleasure when a superb recording seems to come out of nowhere. I'd never heard of Alexandra Conunova, but her

and pianist Michail Lifits's boldly evocative and intensely felt interpretations of the Prokofiev violin sonatas made me fall in love with this marvellous music all over again.



Christian Hoskins

'Copland Conducts Copland'
Benny Goodman cl Los Angeles Master Chorale; Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra / Aaron Copland
Video director Kirk Browning
 Naxos ⑤ DVD 2 110397 ⑤ Blu-ray Disc NBD0068V (5/18)



Watching the 75-year-old Copland conducting his own music with such obvious enjoyment is a pleasure in itself, but what makes this video special is the performance of the unjustly neglected Suite from *The Tender Land*, music of entrancing radiance, warmth and humanity.



Lindsay Kemp

Buxtehude 'Abendmusiken'
Vox Luminis / Lionel Meunier
 Alpha ⑤ ALPHA287 (9/18)

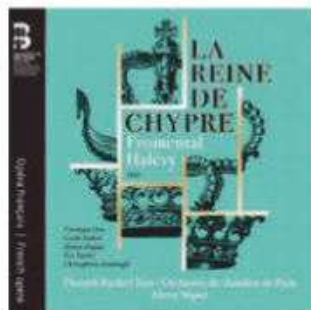


This year I was once again beguiled by Vox Luminis, now bringing their deep and focused expressiveness to motets by Buxtehude, an apogee of all

the beauty, dignity and ingenuity of German 17th-century church music. With eloquent string sonatas added by Ensemble Masques, it does Bach's great predecessor proud.

Richard Lawrence

Halévy La reine de Chypre
Sols; Flemish Radio Choir;
Paris Chamber Orchestra / Hervé Niquet
 Ediciones Singulares ⑤ ② ES1032 (9/18)



It's been a good year for unfamiliar French opera: terrific recordings of Godard's *Dante* (1/18), Lully's *Alceste* (2/18), Rameau's *Naïs* (8/18). But I'm plumping for this *grand opéra* from 1841, superbly performed by Niquet and his forces, with magnificent singing from Véronique Gens and Cyrille Dubois.

Ivan Moody

Górecki String Quartet No 3
Dafô Quartet
 Dux ⑤ DUX1302 (7/18)



In a year full of outstanding releases, the Dafô Quartet's reading of Górecki's Third String Quartet shines brightly. They understand the way this challenging work

relates not only to the composer's famous 'simplified' style, but also to his much earlier music. Their performance is both vibrant and subtle, and beautifully recorded.

Andrew Mellor

Alfred Janson The Wind Blows - Choral Works
Norwegian Soloist's Choir / Grete Pedersen
 BIS ⑤ BIS2341 (10/18)

I was taken aback by the skill, imagination and power of this music by an elder Norwegian composer who has never really had his due. Alfred Janson has worked closely with

Grete Pedersen's Norwegian Soloist's Choir, the superlative quality of whose singing here is a fitting redress to his music's neglect.



Jeremy Nicholas

Rachmaninov Symphonic Dances, etc
Sergey Rachmaninov pf
 Marston mono ⑤ ③ 53022-2 (10/18)

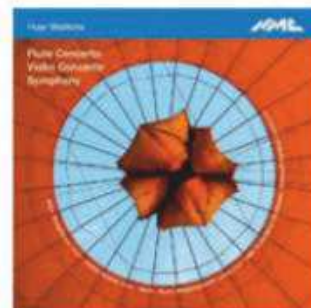


In any other year, 'The Complete Studio Recordings of Eileen Joyce' (Decca) would have been my first choice, but the discovery

of previously unknown recordings of Rachmaninov demonstrating on the piano how he wished his newly composed *Symphonic Dances* to be played was, in the end, by far the most exciting and intriguing release of 2018.

Peter Quantrill

Watkins Symphony, etc
Hallé / R Wigglesworth
 NMC ⑤ NMCD224 (11/18)



Here is that rare creature - a new symphony that's worthy of the name. Quickly establishing the 'large-scale integration of contrasts' demanded

of the genre's examples by Hans Keller, and by means of an orchestra that Nielsen would recognise, Huw Watkins fills a two-movement structure with urgent channels of argument and even more necessary pools of reflection. The first movement reaches a crisis as seemingly inevitable as its climactic recapitulation, promising resolution, but that would spoil the surprise. Piece, performance, recording: all equally satisfying.

Christopher Nickol

'Romantic Organ Music'
Simon Preston org
 Decca Eloquence ⑤ ② ELQ482 4941 (3/18)



At last! CD reissues of these classic LP recordings have finally appeared. Former *Gramophone* reviewer Stanley Webb described Simon Preston as

a 'fastidious perfectionist', and it was this approach that resulted in such virtuoso performances. A personal highlight is his account of Reubke's *Sonata on the 94th Psalm*; released in 1964, it still sounds magnificent!

Richard Osborne

Beethoven Piano Sonatas - No 14, 'Moonlight', Op 27 No 2 and No 29, 'Hammerklavier', Op 106
Murray Perahia pf
 DG ⑤ 479 8353 (3/18)



It is rare nowadays to find a record of Beethoven piano sonatas to set alongside classic recordings by pianists such as Solomon, Serkin, Kempff, and Arrau, but Murray Perahia's spiritually luminous and technically superb accounts of the *Moonlight* and *Hammerklavier* sonatas could be judged exceptional in any era.

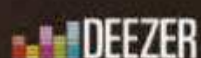
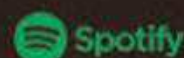


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COSÌ FAN TUTTE **MOZART**

Royal Opera House

The school for lovers, Mozarts alternative title for *Così fan tutte*, is given a playful, theatrical treatment by German director Jan Philipp Glöer, who sets this new production for The Royal Opera in a theatre. The four lovers are performed by a cast of young rising stars, conducted by Semyon Bychkov.

DVD | BLU-RAY



MADAMA BUTTERFLY **PUCCINI**

Royal Opera House

Puccini's Japanese tragedy is given a ravishing production by The Royal Opera. Antonio Pappano, conducts an exceptionally fine cast with the Royal Opera Chorus and the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House. Powerful performances show why *Madama Butterfly* remains one of the all-time operatic favourites.

DVD | BLU-RAY

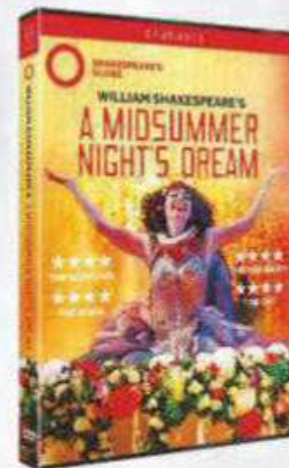


HAMLET **DEAN**

Glyndebourne

Bret Dean's colourful, energetic, witty and richly lyrical music expertly captures the modernity of Shakespeare's timeless tale, while also exploiting the traditional operatic elements of arias, ensembles and choruses. The artists include Allan Clayton, Sarah Connolly and Barbara Hannigan, conducted by Vladimir Jurowski.

DVD | BLU-RAY



A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM **SHAKESPEARE**

Shakespeare's Globe

Fusing music dance and some serious comedy, Emma Rice's first production as Artistic Director brings the Dream crashing into the Globe's magical setting. Naughty, tender, transgressive and surprising, it is truly a festival of theatre. Meow Meow plays the mischievous fairy queen Titania.

DVD



TWELFTH NIGHT **SHAKESPEARE**

Royal Shakespeare Company

Twins are separated in a shipwreck and forced to fend for themselves in a strange land. The first twin, Viola, falls in love with Orsino, who dotes on Olivia, who falls for Viola but is idolised by Malvolio. Enter Sebastian, who is the spitting image of his twin sister... *Twelfth Night* is a tale of unrequited love - hilarious and heartbreaking.

DVD

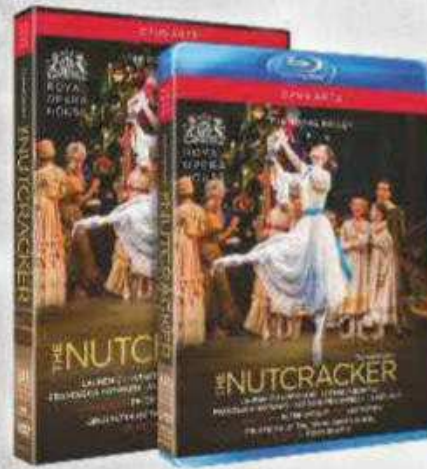


ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND **TALBOT**

Royal Opera House

The Royal Ballet's Christopher Wheeldon magically captured the twists and turns of Lewis Carroll's classic story. Joby Talbot's original score is full of sweeping melodies and contemporary sounds. Lauren Cuthbertson stars as the inquisitive Alice, along with Federico Bonelli, Steven McRae, and Laura Morera in the lead roles.

DVD | BLU-RAY

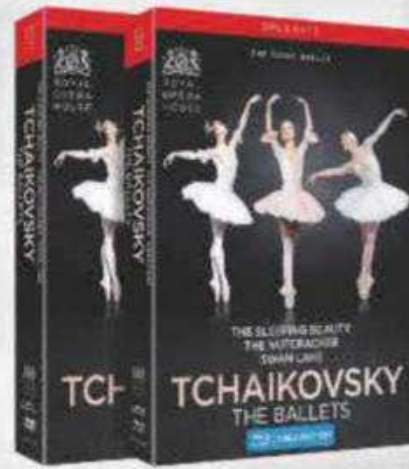


THE NUTCRACKER **TCHAIKOVSKY**

Royal Opera House

The Nutcracker is the quintessential Christmas ballet. Lauren Cuthbertson and Federico Bonelli dance the exquisite Sugar Plum Fairy and her Prince; Francesca Hayward and Alexander Campbell take the roles of Clara and the Nutcracker; and Gary Avis is the mysterious, kindly Drosselmeyer.

DVD | BLU-RAY



TCHAIKOVSKY **THE BALLET**

Royal Opera House

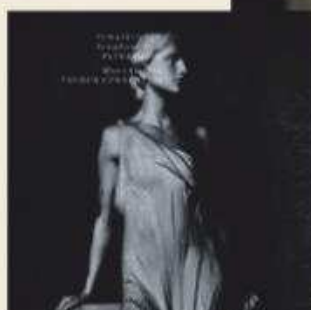
This special collection includes three Royal Ballet performances masterpieces: Anthony Dowell's majestic production of the beautiful and romantic tragedy *Swan Lake*; *The Sleeping Beauty* in its detailed re-creation by Monica Mason of and Peter Wright's classic production of the quintessential Christmas ballet, *The Nutcracker*.

3 DVD | 3 BLU-RAY SET

Mark Pullinger

Tchaikovsky Symphony No 6
MusicAeterna / Teodor Currentzis
 Sony Ⓢ 88985 40435-2 (1/18)

Two controversial Tchaikovsky recordings compete for my vote. Stefan Herheim's enthralling *Pique Dame* (3/18) comes to London soon, the composer central to the action. But Teodor Currentzis's devastating *Pathétique* with MusicAeterna wins – as bleak, as nihilistic and as embittered as I've ever heard. And I adore it.



Guy Rickards

Ruehr String Quartets Nos 1-6
Stephen Salters *bar*
Borromeo Quartet; Cypress Quartet
 Avie Ⓜ ② AV2379 (5/18)

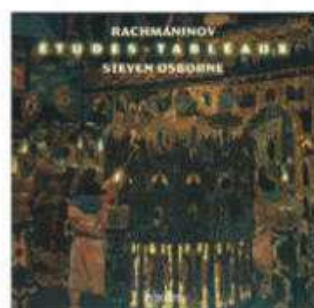


Rarely nowadays does one encounter a new, living master of the quartet medium, but Elena Ruehr is just that. Her six, fluently written

quartets are exquisitely performed on this, Avie's third release of Ruehr's music, by the Cypress and (in No 2) Borromeo Quartets, and the sound is beautifully clear. The recording just edges ahead of Kenneth Hesketh's marvellous orchestral disc, 'In actu oculi' (12/18).

Patrick Rucker

Rachmaninov Complete Études-tableaux
Steven Osborne *pf*
 Hyperion Ⓢ CDA68188 (9/18)



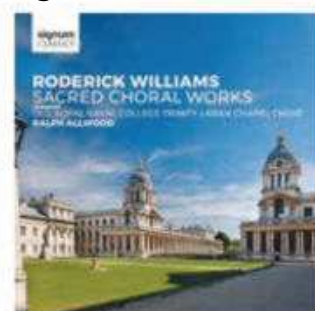
Some of the most beautiful piano-playing I've heard this year, live or recorded, has been Steven Osborne's stunning traversal of Rachmaninov's

Études-tableaux. Osborne's refreshingly original take on the music, emotional breadth and sheer pianistic finesse keep me coming back for more. Surely Rachmaninov would have been proud.



Malcolm Riley

R Williams 'Sacred Choral Works'
Old Royal Naval College Trinity Laban
Chapel Choir / Ralph Allwood with
Jonathan Eyre *pf/cond*
 Signum Ⓢ SIGCD517 (2/18)



As a 'singer who also composes', Roderick Williams has always been well placed to bring those special, extra dimensions to his own music, ie what works best from

both a technical as well as an interpretative standpoint. This vivid choral anthology has given continued pleasure throughout the year, filled as it is with an astonishing versatility of moods and styles.

Edward Seckerson

Bernstein Symphonies Nos 1-3;
 Prelude, Fugue and Riffs
Sols; Orchestra & Chorus of the
Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia /
Sir Antonio Pappano
 Warner Classics Ⓜ ② 9029 56615-8 (9/18)



It had to be Bernstein in his centenary year and it had to be Pappano's rendition of the three symphonies with the orchestra which once boasted Lenny as

President. Casting young Italian pianist Beatrice Rana as the protagonist of the masterful Second, *The Age of Anxiety*, was a deft touch, but the really inspired piece of casting was that of Josephine Barstow as Speaker in the *Kaddish*. For once, the spoken text really ignites.

Marc Rochester

Messiaen
 La Nativité du Seigneur
Richard Gowers *org*
 King's College, Cambridge Ⓢ KGS0025
 (12/18)

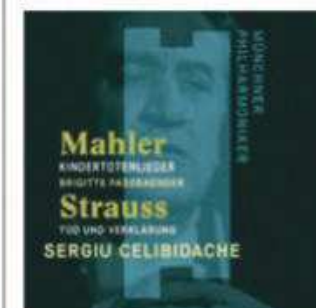


By a most fortuitous happenstance, my recording of the year is Christmas music from King's College Chapel, Cambridge. But there's not a carol in sight. No feel-good

Rutter. No spine-tingling Willcocks descant. Instead the muscular, perceptive, authoritative playing of Richard Gowers, who has devoted his debut solo disc on the College's own label to Messiaen's visionary *La Nativité du Seigneur*.

Hugo Shirley

Mahler Kindertotenlieder
R Strauss Tod und Verklärung
Brigitte Fassbaender *mez*
Munich Philharmonic / Sergiu Celibidache
 Münchner Philharmoniker Ⓢ MPHIL0006
 (3/18)



No Christmas cheer here, I'm afraid, rather a magnificent live recording from 1983, released in a new remastering, which captures the remarkable

Brigitte Fassbaender at her most intensely moving in some of the most powerful songs in the repertoire. Sergiu Celibidache and the Munich Philharmonic accompany her in the Mahler superbly, and offer a fascinating Strauss coupling too.

Pwyll ap Siôn

Various Cpsrs Standard Time

Trio HLK

Ubuntu Music (F) UBU0006 (7/18)



There's nothing standard about the shaping of musical time on Trio HLK's excellent debut release. Also featuring Evelyn Glennie on several tracks,

Nancarrow-style polymetres collide and fuse with complex harmonies in radical reinterpretations of jazz standards. Their live performances are also scintillating, as witnessed at this year's Machynlleth Festival.

David Threasher

Tchaikovsky Symphony No 6

MusicAeterna / Teodor Currentzis

Sony (F) 88985 40435-2 (1/18)



A good year for Haydn, whether solo (Paul Lewis), chamber (Trio Wanderer, Doric Quartet) or symphonic (many). But Teodor Currentzis's

Tchaikovsky became the true ear-opener of the year – not merely a recording of a symphony but a recording event in itself, mining this miraculous work's details as rarely before.

Richard Wigmore

Handel 'Finest Arias for Base Voice, Vol 2'

Christopher Purves bar **Arcangelo / Jonathan Cohen**

Hyperion (F) CDA68152 (8/18)



Another winner of a programme showcasing the dramatic variety of Handel's music for bass, from the swaggering Saracen King Argante in

Rinaldo to the grieving father Gobrias in *Belshazzar*. Ranging from baleful basso profundo to mellifluous high baritone, Christopher Purves – two voices for the price of one – brings each of these disparate characters thrillingly alive. Arcangelo match him all the way in drama and colour.

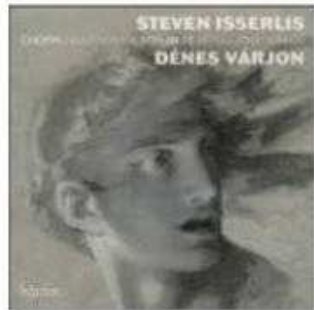
Harriet Smith

Chopin Cello Sonata, etc **Franchomme**

Nocturne **Schubert** Arpeggione Sonata

Steven Isserlis vc **Dénes Várjon** pf

Hyperion (F) CDA68227 (10/18)



The perfect partnership, in which the 1851 Érard deserves equal billing with the players. Isserlis and Várjon illuminate Chopin's

Introduction and Polonaise brillante and Franchomme's C minor Nocturne with as much care as the musical jewels on the disc: the sonatas by Schubert and Chopin. The result is pure gold.

David Vickers

Buxtehude 'Abendmusiken'

Vox Luminis / Lionel Meunier

Alpha (F) ALPHA287 (9/18)



Little is known about what Buxtehude presented in his annual series of Sunday concerts during Advent. Vox Luminis and

Ensemble Masques collaborate intelligently on this free-flowing mixture of chamber sonatas and sacred pieces in performances of sensitivity and harmonic finesse.

David Patrick Stearns

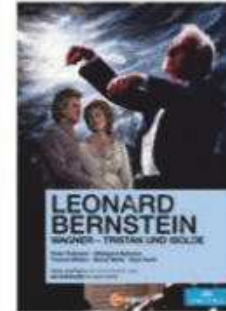
Wagner Tristan und Isolde

Sols; Bavarian Radio Symphony Chorus and Orchestra / Leonard Bernstein

Video director **Karlheinz Hundorf**

C Major Entertainment (F) (3) DVD 46208;

(F) Blu-ray 746304 (9/18)



Bernstein liked to stop time. Whether he succeeded in key moments of his 1981 *Tristan* is debated anew in this first US release of the video made during the live Philips recording. Staging elements are minimal, but

Peter Hofmann and Hildegard Behrens are more entrancing when seen as well as heard.

Richard Whitehouse

Ferneyhough La terre est un homme

BBC Symphony Orchestra / Martyn Brabbins

NMC (F) NMCD231 (5/18)



Brian Ferneyhough's 75th birthday couldn't have been more impressively marked than with NMC's release featuring two major orchestral works, the intricate

Plötzlichkeit and intense *La terre est un homme*, both being accorded virtuoso renderings by the BBC Symphony with Martyn Brabbins. A standout release in any year.

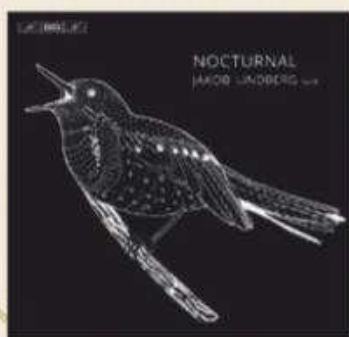
William Yeoman

Nocturnal Lute music from Dowland to Britten

Jakob Lindberg lute

BIS (F) BIS2082 (A/18)

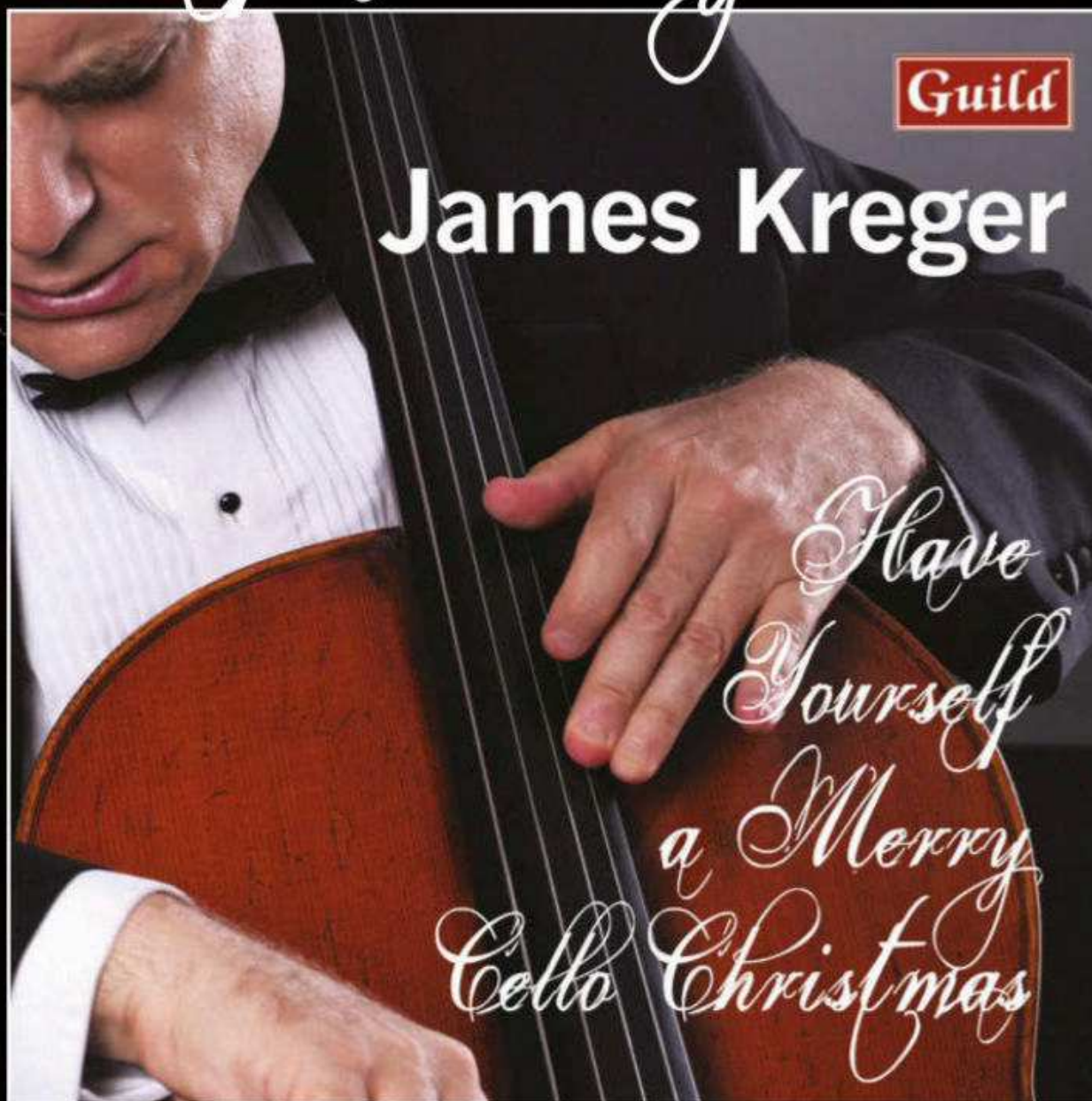
Let's call it the lutenist's revenge, this remarkable recording of Britten's classical guitar masterpiece, *Nocturnal*, after John Dowland, performed on the lute. After all, how often do we hear lute music on guitar? That pieces by Dowland, Holborne, Bacheler et al swarm about the Britten like astonished ghosts is a bonus.



PHOTOGRAPHY: GIOVANNA ORBELLI

James Kreger

Have Yourself a Merry Cello Christmas



Internationally acclaimed cellist, James Kreger, has created a Christmas album with a difference. In his own words: *"The more I thought about it, the more I realized that the thrill of engaging the most profound and challenging cello masterpieces does not inhibit my deep affection for these Christmas melodies or my desire to 'sing' them, as so many people around the world love to do. My aim is to present them from my own perspective, in fashions that maximize their beauty and bring out their unexpected qualities."*

The result is an album of Christmas music skilfully arranged with the cello taking the vocal line.

Includes: Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas ~ O Holy Night! ~ Away in a Manger ~ We Three Kings/What Child Is This? ~ Go Tell It on the Mountain ~ It Came Upon a Midnight Clear ~ I Don't Know How to Love Him ~ First Noel ~ Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire ~ God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen ~ Angels We Have Heard on High ~ Little Drummer Boy ~ Silent Night

James Kreger, cello, with: Bill Mays and Alex Rybeck, piano; Andrew Serman, woodwinds; Sean Harkness, guitars; Melanie Feld, oboe & English horn; William Galison, harmonica; Lynette Wardle, harp; Patrick Milando, French Horn; Bill Hayes, percussion; Ned Paul Ginsburg, synthesizers & arrangements.

GMCD 7812

"This is a lovely collection of heartwarming, superb arrangements that is also a beautiful and unexpected way to channel the talent of James Kreger." Fanfare Magazine

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Festive disc of the year: Apollo's Fire bring a huge variation of mood, geography and style to Christmas on Sugarloaf Mountain

It's the most musical time of the year

Andrew Mellor settles down to long winter evenings with a mixed bag of this year's Christmas albums, from the ultra-traditional to the exotically folksy

Another year, another lesson in how difficult it is to make a Christmas record that satisfies a particular market and offers a warm seasonal embrace at the same time. Still, as this is the season of goodwill, I sincerely hope you'll consider allowing one or more of these Yuletide waifs and strays into your home this holiday season.

You have plenty of choice. There's the elbow-patched academic who'll lull you into a satisfied sleep after Christmas lunch with tales of discrepancies in the surviving manuscripts of a well-known carol. There's the local organist who genuinely believes he metamorphoses into the most risqué of entertainers the moment he dons a paper hat. There's the American hippie-fiddler who'll infuriate you on Christmas Eve but be your new best friend by Boxing Day. There's the Swede with flowers in her hair and an affecting voice whose combination

of innocent freshness and folkloric darkness will be playing on your mind until March. There's your precociously clever niece back from her studies at the Sorbonne, an endless source of knowledge but with a lot to learn about how to kick back during the holidays. There's the visitor from Japan, full of expertise and admiration for Western culture but with something lost in translation. And among the many more are those old regulars who might set your eyes rolling when you see them coming, but when all's said and done, help make Christmas Christmas.

One such guest is King's College Choir, whose Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols was first presented a century ago in 1918. The choir's **100 Years of Nine Lessons & Carols** takes previously unpublished broadcast material dating back to the David Willcocks regime and sets it alongside new studio recordings on a separate disc. Given the centenary,

it would have been nice to hear some performances from earlier than 1958, perhaps some under Boris Ord (as it is, we get just 70 years of carols and no lessons) but it's interesting to chart the choir's loosening-up under Philip Ledger and Stephen Cleobury.

In the latter's time, text has come to play second fiddle to musical phrase in notable contrast to the choir's neighbours at St John's; sometimes the choir's tone curdles on a *forte* (Rütti's *I wonder as I wander*) and sometimes Cleobury's tempos can be ponderous (Gardner's *Tomorrow shall be my dancing day*). Still, CD 1 contains some of Cleobury's most inspired new commissions (he initiated the annual practice) and includes big hymn-carols sung live with the communal heft and embrace of a full congregation.

That is what big-hitters like *O come all ye faithful* need, but as observed in years past, we tend to get sterile recordings

of overly perfect choirs singing such hymn-carols alone in April.

Which is precisely what comes our way from the adult choir of Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge. It has assembled an academically and stylistically fertile

album in **Cantique de Noël**, which according to director Geoffrey Webber 'aims to capture some reflection of ... French romantic fervour, highlighting an aspect of Christmas that is sometimes lost amidst the Anglo-Saxon tradition of Christmas trees and domestic bliss'. Mission accomplished, and I wish more high-end university choirs took such an academic approach to their recording activities.

But be warned: musicology does not a joyous festive album make, and I felt frozen out in what might have been the rousing finale, *Adeste fideles* (no danger of Anglo-Saxon bliss encroaching on Gounod's austere and joyless arrangement). All in all, the disc lacks meat. Some of the repertoire sounds like French G&S (not a compliment), some is frustratingly dry, but Saint-Saëns's *Domine, ego credidi* is worth hearing with Robert Humphries's appropriately nasal tenor – a sign of how well the ensemble has absorbed the Gallic style (the reedy organ of Exeter College, Oxford, helps).

The elephantine void in the room – the lack of a congregation – is bypassed by the girl choristers of Ely Cathedral, who stick to anthem carols by living composers and offer bright, firm, well-supported but honest singing that is frequently joyous and only occasionally a little strained. But if the singing on **An Ely Christmas** isn't affected, the repertoire is – with plenty of enforced jollity from choir (nobody should have to hear Anglican lay-clerks doo-wopping) and organ and countless examples of composers using both to out-decorate and obscure cherished tunes.

Which brings us once more to the thorny issue of how to write contemporary Christmas music, with thanks to Sonoro for giving us a smorgasbord of the good, the bad

and the ugly in **Christmas with Sonoro**. Some pieces here do what carols should: Rutter (of course) and his *Wexford Carol*, Spicer and his *In a field as I lay*, Beamish and her *In the stillness* and all the arrangements by the disc's organist Michael Higgins, who tends to give us a well-known tune straight, subtly re-contextualised but with transformative results (but a black mark for the myriad suspensions ladled on to *Silent night*). For all those gems, efficiently sung, I wound up frustrated by the cheap display, naff jazz-hands and faux harmonic depth infesting works by Malcolm Archer, Gareth Treseder, Stuart Nicholson and Becky McGlade while Warlock's *Bethlehem Down* and Howells's *A Spotless Rose* seem like apologetic fillers (while doing those others no favours).

No extraneous emotive buttons are pushed on **A Vaughan Williams Christmas**, an earnest exploration of 'Christmas as he [RVW] saw and heard it' which aims also to draw attention to

the composer's belief that amateur performance was the bedrock of Christmas music-making. So it's frustrating that we again hear a clipped,

clean professional choir alone in a empty church (even in *O Little Town*) which is, apparently, precisely not what the composer would have wanted to hear.

All in all, it's very sober fare for Christmas – dry even – but it is impossible to dismiss given its content (12 first recordings, though you'll hear why the works aren't in the repertoire), its neat performances from the Royal Hospital Chapel Choir and its thorough academic contextualisation. The austerity of *Nine Carols for Male Voices* can stop you in your tracks; it's difficult to hear the *Mummers' Carol* without considering the British troops for whom it was written, stationed in windswept Iceland during the Second World War.

'A Vaughan Williams Christmas' is a disc about Christmas, not for Christmas. The same might be said of The Sixteen's **A Renaissance Christmas**, the weakest of the choir's three most recent seasonal offerings when judged as a festive product. Notwithstanding Kirbye's awesome *Vox in Rama*, it's a long wait through the brown rice of plainsong and austere polyphony

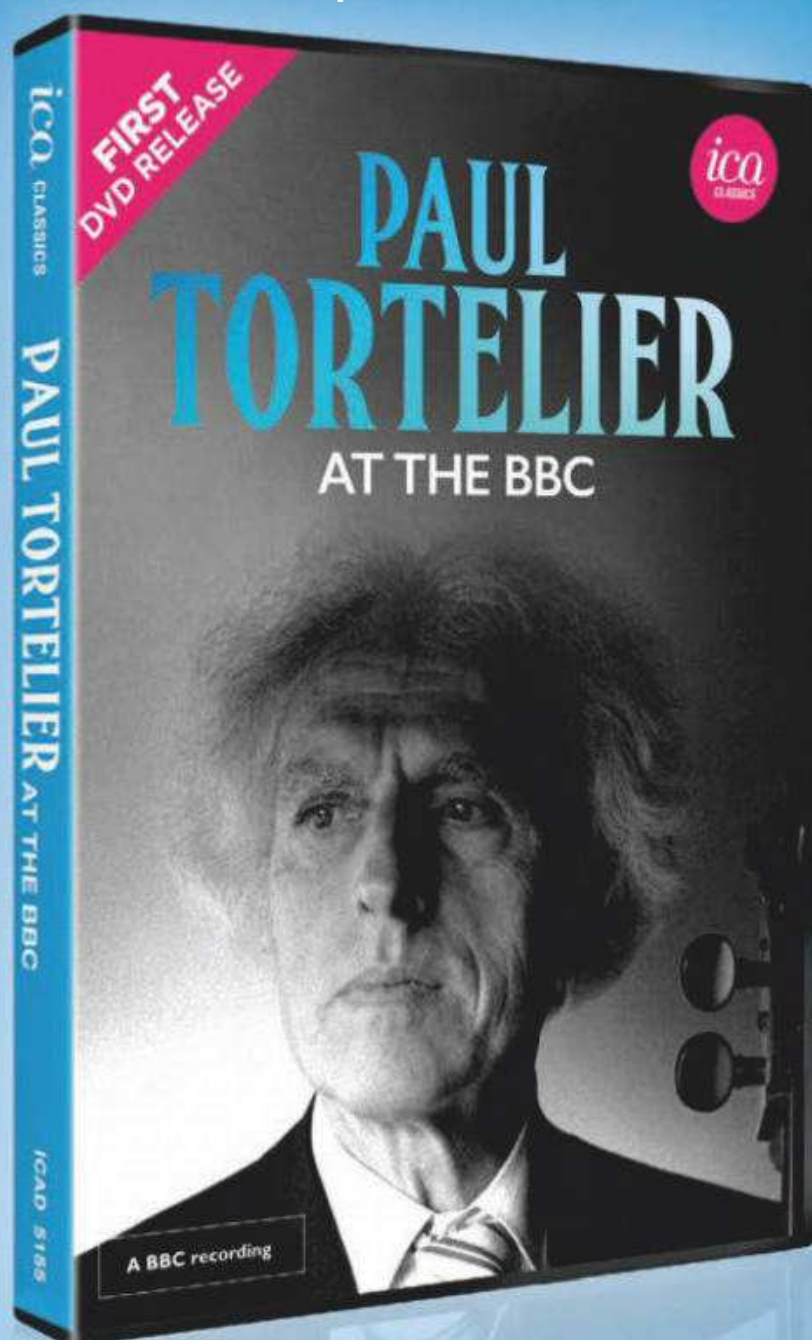
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Style and individuality: the Juice Vocal Ensemble offer a unique Christmas album

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PAUL TORTELIER AT THE BBC

In March 2014, the BBC drew from their archives a selection of films to mark the centenary of Paul Tortelier, offering a portrait of one of the truly great cellists. Tortelier was an artist of the utmost probity, integrity and sincerity who lived through and witnessed almost an entire musical century.

Paul Tortelier at the BBC is here presented on DVD for the first time. The accompanying booklet features a moving tribute from Yan Pascal Tortelier to his father along with photographs drawn from the family archives.

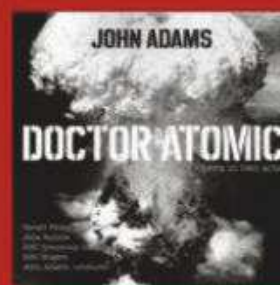
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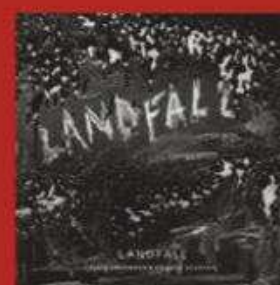
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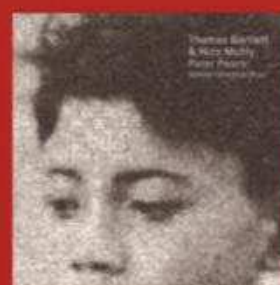
JOHN ADAMS
DOCTOR ATOMIC



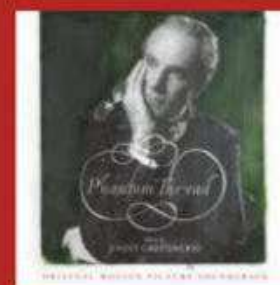
JOHN ADAMS
VIOLIN CONCERTO



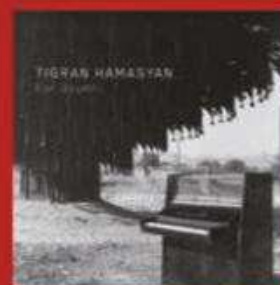
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CONSTITUTION!



JOSHUA REDMAN
STILL DREAMING (FEAT. RON MILES,
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STEVE REICH
PULSE / QUARTET

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to the festive 'Noels' that cap Philips's *O beatum et sacrosanctum diem* (track 17 of 19). Would I have been so uninterested in the tender singing of The Sixteen in Tallis, Byrd, Eccard and Lassus if I hadn't been waiting for the ringing of jingle bells? Perhaps not, but there's a slight sense of some works here rattled through, Guerrero's *Pastores loquebantur* among them. Perhaps they were: this is the only disc of the batch actually recorded at Christmas.







Another top-drawer ensemble gifting us a Christmas let-down is the Bach Collegium Japan. **A Christmas Greeting** starts out as a touching meeting of Lutheran decency with Japanese order but quickly devolves into something more syrupy and odd. Nobody told the performers, however, who approach the schmaltzy key changes sprinkled through a series of carol medleys as if they're still singing Bach. The highlight is Masaaki Suzuki's beautiful performance, at the organ, of numbers from Louis-Claude Daquin's *Livre des Noël pour l'orgue et le clavecin*. Scattered throughout a disorderly sequence, they quickly become islands of nourishment.

There are other ways to reveal fresh musical truths in the context of Christmas, and the determination of another early music group to do so has produced my vote for festive disc of the year. **Christmas on Sugarloaf Mountain** from Apollo's Fire charts the passage of Scottish and Irish immigrants to the Appalachian Mountains in the 1830s. The Baroque music group gives us sounds we don't often associate with Bethlehem but are probably far closer to what was heard there: zingy harps, reedy winds and plenteous modality.

At first it sounds like a try-hard jamboree. You quickly realise it is far more, built of extreme focus yet huge variation in mood, geography and style – from Medieval to Soul, Somerset to Kentucky. It is sung and played with an expertise that doesn't trespass on enjoyment and it draws you deeper and deeper in across its six chapters. Jeannette Sorrell's arrangements get to the point: *I wonder as I wander* is urgent in its whimsy; her *Yorkshire Carol* has a tasteful brand of musical humour not often heard in seasonal music. For all the breathless rollicking and earnest exploration, there are tears under the surface that highlight a vital part of the Christmas story, enforced emigration and all. The southern folk hymns *Bright Morning Stars* and the quiet finale *The Parting Glass* remind us that, sometimes, two beautiful voices entwined together and imbued with feeling are powerful enough.

THE CHRISTMAS LIST

Your guide to the festive season's recordings

	100 Years of Nine Lessons and Carols Choir of King's College, Cambridge / Various King's College, Cambridge King's College, Cambridge Ⓟ ② KGS0033
	Cantique de Noël Choir of Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge / Geoffrey Webber Delphian Ⓟ DCD34197
	An Ely Christmas Girls and Lay Clerks of Ely Cathedral / Sarah MacDonald Regent Ⓜ REGCD527
	Christmas with Sonoro Sonoro / Neil Ferris Resonus Ⓟ RES10226
	A Vaughan Williams Christmas Choir of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea / William Vann Albion Ⓟ ALBCD035
	A Renaissance Christmas The Sixteen / Harry Christophers Coro Ⓟ COR16167
	A Christmas Greeting Bach Collegium Japan / Masaaki Suzuki BIS Ⓟ BIS2291
	Christmas on Sugarloaf Mountain Apollo's Fire Avie Ⓟ AV2396
	Darkest Midnight Papagena Somm Céleste Ⓟ SOMM0189
	Snow Queens Juice Vocal Ensemble Resonus Ⓟ RES10224
	Folkjul II Gunnar Idenstam BIS Ⓟ BIS2334

Darkest Midnight from single-voice vocal ensemble Papagena returns to roots, too, but here the feeling is of a new age Christmas circa 1998 rather than 1838 (yes, *Gaudete!* is included). Papagena pride themselves on lack of amplification but the arid sound production on their recording is anything but warm and embracing. There are some beautiful moments, Taverner's *A Nativity* and the traditional *Es ist ein Ros* among them, but a lack of focus – *Balulalow* into Joni Mitchell's *The River* into *Jingle Bells* – ultimately proves as frustrating as that sterile studio sound.

Snow Queens, from another female vocal ensemble, provides copious lessons in how distillation and discipline can be effective even in communal seasonal music. There is a real power to this Yuletide *Winterreise* through bespoke new commissions and homespun arrangements, all from musicians interested in progressing the language of Christmas music by unravelling its DNA rather than slathering it with dad-dancing rhythms and added-note harmonies. The rhetoric of *A Coventry Carol* is turned on its head in Anna Snow's questing, cyclic arrangement; there is nothing contrived or predictable here and the results make for an unsettling, beautiful, consistent and cleansing album sung with style and individuality by Juice.

Individuality is one word you could append to the Swede Gunnar Idenstam, whose organ improvisations occupy their own universe – part hard apocalyptic rock, part elfin folklore, part nave-shaking French symphony. **Folkjul II** is a follow-up to 2007's 'Folkjul' ('Folk Christmas') but if you haven't come across Idenstam's exotic art before, I'd heartily recommend his 'Songs for Jukkasjärvi' (BIS).

'Folkjul II' trades that album's herding yoiks for chorales and carols, similarly embedded in the Idenstam sound of folk flutes and fiddles, electronics and voices, all of which are egged on to spine-tingling climaxes by Idenstam's capering, roaring organ (an acquired taste, I can hear some saying). Sandra Marteleur's fiddle ariosos have a strange wonder, Ulrika Bodén's vocal solos are mesmeric, Idenstam's touch on the organ is as funky as it is majestic, Gary Graden's St Jacobs Chamber Choir sounds full-bodied and bright. There are special moments and ground-moving modulations around every corner. But it doesn't dilute the experience, nor the deep sense of mystery, that you often know from the start of many a piece – as in the pregnant organ rumblings that open *Från himlens höjd* – that an almighty climax is in the pipeline. It is the journey to Christmas encapsulated. **G**

GRAMOPHONE

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Richard Wigmore is bowled over by Sabine Devieille and Lea Desandre, alongside Emmanuelle Haïm and Le Concert d'Astrée, in an exquisite recording of Handel cantatas



Handel

'Italian Cantatas'

Aminta e Fillide, HWV83^a. Armida abbandonata, HWV105^b. La Lucrezia, HWV145^c. Trio Sonata, Op 2 No 1 HWV386^b

^{ab}Sabine Devieille *sop* ^{bc}Lea Desandre *mez*

Le Concert d'Astrée / Emmanuelle Haïm *hpd/org*

Erato (®) (two discs for the price of one)

9029 56336-2 (96' • DDD • T/t)

The Arcadia evoked in Handel's Italian cantatas can be a pretty cruel and cynical place, especially if you're an amorous swain. Time and again the assorted Tirsis, Filenos and Dalisos pine in vain for their heartless Amarillis and Cloris. *Aminta e Fillide* – an unstaged miniature opera for two voices – is a rare case where the man gets lucky. Having determinedly set herself against Cupid's wiles, the shepherdess Fillide is finally won over by the shepherd Aminta's sheer constancy. Here, for once, Arcadia lives up to its billing.

Heard here in the expanded version Handel prepared for performance in the Marquis Ruspoli's sumptuous gardens in July 1708, *Aminta e Fillide* is one of the most enticing, melodically piquant works from his Italian years. As with so many of his Italian cantatas, Handel lovers coming to *Aminta e Fillide* for the first time are likely to have a pleasurable sense of *déjà entendu*. Never one to waste a good idea, he was quick to recycle many of the cantata's arias, first in his Venice opera *Agrippina*, then in his early London works. Aminta's lament 'Se vago rio', hovering hauntingly between major and minor, became the Sirens' Song in *Rinaldo*, while



'They interact vividly in recitative, and in their arias strike an ideal balance between refinement and intensity'

Fillide's blissful final 'Non si può dar un cor' morphed into a pastoral aria in the *Ode for the Birthday of Queen Anne*.

Handel composed *Aminta e Fillide* for two sopranos, one of whom was the young Margherita Durastanti, Ruspoli's house singer whose association with Handel endured for over a quarter of a century – easily a record. Previous recordings of this delectable work have likewise used a pair of sopranos, notably Gillian Fisher and Patrizia Kwella in the recording directed by Denys Darlow (Hyperion, 12/84), and Nuria Rial and Grazia Schiavo with La Risonanza (Glossa, 12/08). Even allowing for the inevitable lure of novelty, neither of those versions quite matches the vocal lustre and theatrical flair of this Erato recording, cast with a soprano and mezzo. Both singers have unblemished voices of



Free-soaring: Sabine Devieille with Emmanuelle Haïm



Left to right: Sabine Devieille, Lea Desandre and Emmanuelle Haïm

beautiful quality: Sabine Devieille, as Aminta, pellucid and free-soaring, Lea Desandre with a dark flare in her high mezzo. They contrast more sharply than their counterparts on the rival recordings, yet blend exquisitely in the final duet in praise of compassion and fidelity.

From Aminta's increasingly desperate plea to the fleeing Fillide, 'Fermati, non fuggir', Devieille and Desandre trace a riveting emotional journey, capturing every nuance in music and poetry without exaggeration or gratuitous 'effects'. They interact vividly in recitative, and in their arias strike an ideal balance between refinement and dramatic intensity. A shift of sentiment in the 'B' section of an aria is always a cue for a new vocal colour, while in the *da capos* both singers use ornamentation to heighten the expression rather than merely for display. Outstanding in a succession of vocal highlights are Desandre's capricious 'Fu scherzo, fu gioco' as she blithely denounces Cupid, and Devieille's unearthly floated line in 'Se vago rio'.

All the while the players of Le Concert d'Astrée, under Emmanuelle Haïm's animating direction, are far more than mere accompanists, not least in the gusto

with which they second Aminta's avowal of eternal fidelity in 'A dispetto di sorte crudel'. Playing words as well as tones, the crucial cello continuo is always acutely alive to singers and text.

Moving from pastoral to tragedy, each singer gets her own, searing solo cantata, separated by a light-footed performance of Handel's B minor Trio Sonata that stresses the vocal nature of its inspiration. With her limpid timbre and grace of line and ornament, Sabine Devieille touchingly embodies the abandoned Armida's vulnerability and pathos. Her sublime final siciliano emerges as a true catharsis, with solo violin as an agent of consolation. Less predictably, perhaps, Devieille summons the Furies with vehement attack and a cutting edge to her tone, abetted by seething, scything strings.

With a comparably brilliant coloratura technique, Lea Desandre is just as thrilling in Handel's more flamboyant invocation to the Furies in the continuo-accompanied *La Lucrezia*, most violent and dissonant of all his Italian cantatas. In symbiotic partnership with Atsushi Sakai's cello, she spins a pure and eloquent line in her two grieving arias; and with subtle control of

vibrato she movingly conveys a sense of Lucretia's ebbing life in the arioso 'Già nel seno', before rousing herself for a final savage denunciation of Tarquinius. Reviewers are paid partly to look for trouble. There simply isn't any, in a disc that even amid fierce competition is a Handelian winner. **Richard Wigmore**

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Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue

Orchestral



Edward Seckerson hears Gergiev's take on Stravinsky's *Petrushka*:

'Gergiev is so mindful of the music's folksy roots that the whole has an immediacy that is highly distinctive' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 67**



David Fanning gets to grips with a pair of new Weinberg discs:

'The symphony is so abrasive, so unrelentingly dark and so uncompromising that austere barely begins to describe it' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 69**

Beethoven

Piano Concertos – No 4, Op 58;

No 5, 'Emperor', Op 73

Nicholas Angelich *pf*

Insula Orchestra / Laurence Equilbey

Erato © 9029 56341-7 (74' • DDD)



This new account of Beethoven's last two piano concertos finds Nicholas Angelich in

the company of Laurence Equilbey's period-instrument Insula Orchestra. After my recent disappointing encounter with the Fourth Concerto in the hands of Leeds winner Eric Lu, it was a relief to be in the company of altogether more compelling music-making.

From the off, the benefits of the piano – an 1892 Pleyel – are apparent: it has the softness to blend naturally with the ensemble but the projection to make an impact in Beethoven's more extrovert writing. Levin's fortepianos for his groundbreaking 1990s cycle with Gardiner are altogether different in effect, the Paul McNulty copy of a Walter & Sohn instrument sounding almost overly timid in the Fourth.

In the Fourth's opening *Allegro moderato*, Equilbey's *tuttis* are every bit as beguiling as the passages with soloist and Angelich imbues the more filigree writing with a lovely elegance (from 3'50" or 9'37"). If he doesn't quite attain the sublime heights of, say, Gilels and Andsnes, it's nevertheless an account full of character, and finely paced. The drama of the slow movement is vividly drawn, the piano initially sounding positively beseeching against a no-nonsense orchestra. In the finale, though, I could have done with a degree more glee from Angelich, though the interplay between piano and orchestra has an effective inevitability about it.

The pared-down vibrato-light strings of the Insula are a particular asset in the opening bars of the Fifth's slow movement, and Angelich responds in kind – phrasing

the music as a conversation with the orchestra, rather than an endless flowing melody. There's some wonderfully characterful horn-playing too. And the piano again shows its flexibility: the slow-movement trills possess clarity without harshness, while the concerto's more overtly dramatic moments, such as the opening of the first and last movements, never sound underpowered. In the first, I like the way Equilbey keeps things lean and flowing, underpinned by characterful timpani. Only at times in the finale did I want something more overtly joyous from Angelich, though again Equilbey coaxes plenty of energy from the orchestra, achieving a real one-in-a-bar feel.

Harriet Smith

Selected comparison – coupled as above:

Levin, ORR, Gardiner

(12/96⁸) (ARCH) ➔ 459 622-2AH4

Beethoven

Symphonies – No 2, Op 36; No 7, Op 92

Vienna Symphony Orchestra / Philippe Jordan

Solo Musica Wiener Symphoniker © WS015

(72' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Goldener Saal, Musikverein, Vienna, April 21 & 23, 2017



I'm not entirely sure why the name of the great early 20th-century

Beethoven conductor Felix Weingartner came to mind as I listened to Philippe Jordan's new recording of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. Perhaps it was the admirably no-nonsense shaping of the symphony, with its steadily presented first movement and a gradual increase in locomotive power thereafter. Or perhaps it was that here – in the late Peter Stadlen's phrase about Weingartner – is Beethoven that has about it the quality of 'good lean beef'.

There are differences, of course, principally the modern conductor's disinclination to play the third-movement

Trio as a high-minded dirge. ('An old pilgrims' hymn', as the sleeve notes of yesteryear used to inform us.) Toscanini put that right in the still unsurpassed recording he made with the New York Philharmonic-Symphony only weeks after Weingartner's own sessions in Vienna in March 1936.

Still, with a slightly smaller orchestra than Weingartner's 1930s Vienna Philharmonic, and an even more exacting delineation of rhythm, accent and phrase-shape, Jordan's reading marries forward motion and unforced articulacy in similar measure. The principal strength of his reading is the skill with which the symphony's metric jigsaws are clarified and purveyed by an orchestra whose sound has been sharpened, much as an old scythe might be sharpened after being newly put to the whetstone. All of which makes for an essentially 'classical' reading of the symphony, not least in the finale, which neither seeks nor wins a Wagner-style apotheosis.

It could be argued that so classical a reading neglects to register the gathering scale of the work. Both Weingartner and Toscanini eschew slowness in the *Allegretto*. Their pulse is swift, yet not so swift as to hurry by the emotional peaks to which this imposing ghost of a funeral march occasionally rises.

Equally, some may find the orchestral sound rather too lean in moments such as the tumultuous approach to the first movement's close, where the dissonant bass line rather lacks weight; or in the swording of the first and second violins in the symphony's closing pages. (Excellent as the Musikverein recording is, might not the strings benefit from a touch more 'presence' when the *Pastoral* and Eighth Symphonies are recorded next spring?)

The booklet essay quotes Jordan as seeing the more melodious Second Symphony as being complementary to the Seventh. I would tend to see it more as a forebear than a complement. Whatever the case, Jordan gives a superb account of the piece: rhythmically vital yet showing



Innate sense of drama: Teodor Currentzis and Musica Aeterna bring hair-raising conviction to Mahler's Sixth Symphony – see review on page 64

sufficient regard for the old *cantabile* style to allow the music to sweep by with a flower in its buttonhole. **Richard Osborne**

Symphony No 7 – selected comparisons:

VPO, Weingartner (5/36^R) (NAXO) 8 110862

NYPO, Toscanini (12/36^R) (NAXO) 8 110840

Beintus • Rihm

Beintus *Le petit prince* – Concert Suite^a

Rihm *Das Gehege*^b

^bRyanne Dupuis *sop* ^aEva-Christina

Schönweiss *vn* ^aKirsten Ecke *hp* **Deutsches**

Symphonie-Orchester Berlin / Kent Nagano

Capriccio © C5337 (54' • DDD • T)

Recorded 2011



Kent Nagano's absence from the UK for two decades has been to others' benefit – not least the Bavarian State

Opera, where he began his tenure with a commission from Wolfgang Rihm. Premiered as the first half of a double-bill with Strauss's *Salome*, *Das Gehege* (2005) turns the final scene of Botho Strauss's play *Schlusschor* into a 'nocturnal scene' for

soprano and orchestra. The scenario of a woman entering the cage (the enclosure of the title) of a golden eagle at a Berlin zoo, there attempting intimacy with it before humiliating and dismembering it, is intended as a provocation in the aftermath of German reunification. Rihm responded with this 36-minute monodrama whose exacting soprano part, against an intricate and stylistically wide-ranging orchestral contribution, has parallels with Schoenberg's *Erwartung* of almost a century before. If the later work lacks such mesmeric intensity, its emotive power is scarcely in doubt, not least when Ryanne Dupuis projects the vocal line with unflinching commitment.

A pity that a more fitting coupling was not provided. Encouraged by Nagano while a double-bassist at the Lyon Opéra, Jean-Pascal Beintus has since enjoyed success on both sides of the Atlantic mainly with his film scores. Taken from a production of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *Le petit prince*, this concert suite depicts incidents from the story over 10 brief movements whose technical finesse cannot disguise their stylistic derivativeness or paucity of invention.

Recommended for the Rihm, among the most impressive of his recent works. Both sound and notes leave little to be desired, but might *Capriccio* put an English translation on its website?

Richard Whitehouse

Berio • Boulez • Ravel

Berio *Sinfonia*^a **Boulez** *Notations I-IV*^b

Ravel *La valse*^c

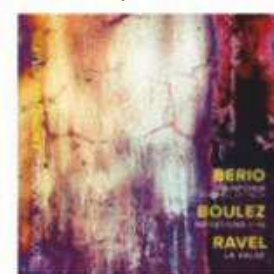
^a**Roomful of Teeth; Seattle Symphony Orchestra / Ludovic Morlot**

Seattle Symphony Media © SSM1018 (58' • DDD)

Recorded live at Benaroya Hall, Seattle,

^bNovember 7 & 9, 2013; ^cFebruary 5, 7 & 8, 2015;

^aFebruary 4 & 6, 2016



In the documentary *Voyage to Cythera*, Berio makes it clear that the many musical references in the third movement of *Sinfonia* are meant in 'a very light, ironical way'. And that's how they come across in the composer's own recording of the original four-movement version, made a few days after the New York premiere in



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1968. No subsequent account has matched its darkly humorous, Beckett-like bite – including the performance Berio conducted at the Concertgebouw in 1997 (included in Vol 6 of the RCO's massive Anthology – RCO Live, 11/11).

There's not much lightness or humour in Ludovic Morlot's performance of the third movement, either, but it is wondrously psychedelic, the orchestral colours oversaturated and almost glaringly bright. He's aided in this by the closely miked recording, which puts the teeming score right in your face. Note the groovy electric harpsichord popping out of the texture, and, in general, how this enhanced level of detail reveals *Sinfonia's* craftsmanship. You can really hear how ingeniously Berio weaves the *Sacre* quotation into the fabric, for example (starting at 3'05"). I also like the ardent, youthful idealism tenor Eric Dudley brings to his spoken part, as it's so evocative of the late '60s. Throughout *Sinfonia*, in fact, the vocal ensemble Roomful of Teeth are superb: pure-toned, rhythmically vital and right at home in the music's inherent theatricality.

To be clear, the lucidity in this performance is not simply due to the miking; Morlot is, as always, a punctilious conductor. Listen, say, to the jittery precision with which the brass and piano volley starting at 1'05" in the fifth movement. And, in fact, in Morlot's hands, the entire finale becomes a study in texture, the cumulative effect subtly shifting the work's centre of gravity away from the third movement to provide a riveting and immensely satisfying conclusion.

Boulez's *Notations* are similarly articulate, and presented here in sound that's far more naturally balanced. The third of the set is as atmospherically and creepily nocturnal as it should be, for instance, yet so finely grained it's as if we're hearing with the aural equivalent of night vision goggles. I wish the second (played last here) had more of the stridency Boulez asks for – Abbado with the Vienna Philharmonic (DG, 4/90) gets it exactly (and thrillingly) right – but it's extremely well played nonetheless.

I have no cavils at all with Morlot's dark vision of *La valse*, however. That there's very little Viennese schmaltz is refreshing, his rubato is generally reined-in yet flexible, and he holds the brass in check until 10'45", when he finally lets loose to powerful effect – an explosive end to an action-packed and rewarding programme.

Andrew Farach-Colton

Bernstein

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue - Suite (arr Harmon). CBS Music. On the Town - Times Square Ballet. Slava! A Political Overture. West Side Story - Mambo. A Bernstein Birthday Bouquet (eight variations on 'New York, New York' from On the Town by Berio, Corigliano, Druckman, Foss, Kirchner, Schuman, Takemitsu and Williams)

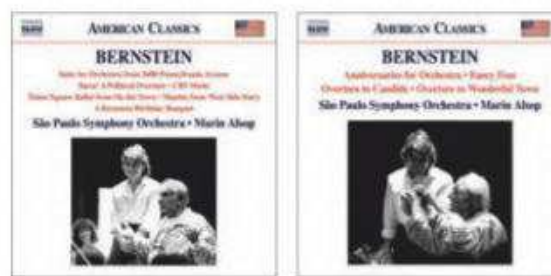
São Paulo Symphony Orchestra / Marin Alsop
Naxos American Classics (M) 8 559813 (54' • DDD)

Bernstein

Anniversaries. Candide - Overture.

Fancy Free. Wonderful Town - Overture

São Paulo Symphony Orchestra / Marin Alsop
Naxos American Classics (M) 8 559814 (52' • DDD)



Those disinclined to acquire Marin Alsop's Bernstein edition in boxed form, handsome though it is, will welcome the release of these hitherto unavailable component discs. The orchestra is the São Paulo Symphony, where Alsop remains at the helm for another year. Touching photographic reminders of her association with the ageing composer-conductor adorn each collection. Neither CD is especially well filled but both contain a high quota of rarities. Where comparisons exist, Alsop is neater than the man himself. She knows how to swing but never over-eggs the pudding.

On the first disc, *West Side Story's* 'Mambo' and a shard from *On the Town* acquire unfamiliar concluding flourishes. Bernstein's problematic 'political' musical, *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*, is sampled in a lopsided suite by Charlie Harmon which includes 'Take Care of This [White] House' (more resonant than ever these days) yet excludes 'Seena', the show's other lyrical highlight. *Slava!*, Bernstein's own offcut, is here. Dedicated to Mstislav Rostropovich, this 'political' overture of 1977 reflects the cellist turned conductor's involvement with domestic rather than Soviet politics as incoming director of the National Symphony Orchestra of Washington DC. Alsop retains the electric guitar which introduces the second theme, doubling sax, and includes its taped element of cliché-ridden political wrangling. If this is not really top-drawer Bernstein, *CBS Music* is one for the diehards, generic background stuff for TV. Of more interest is *A Bernstein Birthday Bouquet*. Eight composers

(from Luciano Berio to William Schuman via Leon Kirchner, Jacob Druckman, Lukas Foss, John Corigliano, John Williams and Tōru Takemitsu) pay disparate tribute to their colleague on the occasion of his 70th birthday. There's more to the set than mere quotation-spotting.

The second disc kicks off with a frisky account of the *Candide* Overture. Given without 'Big Stuff', its introductory vocal number, *Fancy Free* is at times less rhythmically insistent than usual but comes off wonderfully well on its own terms. What might the composer have made of Garth Edwin Sunderland's orchestrations of a selection of his intimate *Anniversaries*? Sunderland avoids obvious overlaps – Bernstein's piano miniatures tended to pop up again within bigger, more public scores – at least until his gentle Haydn-aping farewell. The tune is shared with the hummed finale of Bernstein's *Arias and Barcarolles* of which there are already multiple editions. The playing is good, notwithstanding some strain in the high-lying writing of the previous number. We end with a fleshed-out revamp of the preamble to *Wonderful Town*. Alsop swings gently, perhaps doubtful that a raucous workout would enhance the charm of her iconoclastic idol's most conformist piece of music theatre. **David Gutman**

Copland

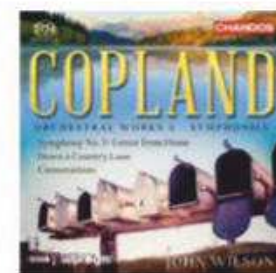
'Orchestral Works, Vol 4'

Symphony No 3. Connotations.

Down a Country Lane. Letter from Home

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra / John Wilson

Chandos (F) CHSA5222 (66' • DDD/DSD)



Whether or not Copland's Third is 'The Great American Symphony', it's definitely a tough nut to crack. Even Leonard Slatkin, whose RCA account provided a persuasively lyrical alternative to the tough resilience of Bernstein's benchmark recordings, couldn't maintain a consistent grip in his lumbering remake for Naxos. John Wilson isn't anywhere near as leisurely as Slatkin but his performance is similarly lacking in urgency and grit. In fact, Wilson's tempos tend to be faster than Bernstein's, hewing closer to Copland's own in his 1958 LSO recording for Everest.

Sonically, the Chandos recording has enormous impact. The bass drum packs a wallop and the atmospheric clarity in delicate passages is dazzling – listen at 5'20" in the central part of the

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From Yuji Takahashi to Dai Fujikura, this compilation gathers together music by seven Japanese composers from different generations, and Masanori Oishi's rich, expressionistic manipulation of the saxophone's sound perfectly communicates each nuance of these works. Dai Fujikura's compositional gifts have been recognised by prominent European figures including Pierre Boulez, George Benjamin and Péter Eötvös; Fujikura's *SAKANA* was inspired by "the light reflecting upon the body of a fish swimming around in the water." In contrast, Yoichi Sugiyama's *Smoking Prohibited, A Bay Street Ballade* is a topical and moving tribute to Eric Garner, contrasting the American anthem with an African-American spiritual song, *Lay This Body Down*, widely sung during the Civil War era.



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scherzo-like second movement. But the interpretation itself is too soft-grained and often oddly tentative. Why are the music's seams so audibly exposed in the opening of that second movement, for example, and where's the *molto espressivo* in the violins' aching line at 6'38" in the first? The violins don't sound secure in the high-lying passage that opens the third movement, either, nor do they attack the *vigoroso* passage at 6'02" with sufficient verve.

Wilson and the orchestra are far more successful in *Connotations*, one of Copland's gnarliest works, composed for the opening of Philharmonic (now David Geffen) Hall at New York's Lincoln Center in 1962. Here, there's urgency and rhythmic vitality in abundance, yet the interpretation as a whole is more refined and varied than Bernstein's (available to download – Sony, 8/73). I find deep sadness in the searching passage at 3'11", dewy idealism at 11'10" and even a hint of real tragedy at 15'50". Some parts do still seem to meander, but I believe that's the composer's fault, and Wilson's performance is the most compelling and imaginative we've had yet.

The two miniatures arranged for chamber orchestra – *Letter from Home* (1944), originally composed for Paul Whiteman's band, and *Down a Country Lane* (1962), originally for piano – are attractive in a homespun way, and played here with poise and affection.

Andrew Farach-Colton

Symphony No 3 – selected comparisons:

New York PO, Bernstein (11/86) (DG) ➔ 419 170-2GH

St Louis SO, Slatkin (2/91) (RCA) ➔ RD60149

Detroit SO, Slatkin (8/17) (NAXO) 8 559844

New York PO, Bernstein (SONY) ➔ SMK63155

LSO, Copland (EVER) EVERCD002

Debussy

Jeux. Marche écossaise sur un thème populaire (DVD only). *Nocturnes*^a.

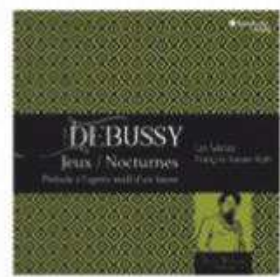
Prélude à L'après-midi d'un faune

^a*Les Cris de Paris; Les Siècles /*

François-Xavier Roth

Harmonia Mundi © (CD + DVD) HMM90 5291

(51' • DDD)



Released as part of Harmonia Mundi's Debussy centenary series, this superb disc

from François-Xavier Roth and Les Siècles also to some extent continues Roth's exploration of music associated with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Nijinsky's notorious *L'après-midi d'un faune* ('Prélude' is omitted from the ballet's title) was first seen in May 1912. Debussy privately

admitted he found the choreography 'grotesque', but refrained from public comment as negotiations with Diaghilev for *Jeux* were already under way. He apparently considered the ambivalent *ménage à trois* scenario for the latter 'idiotic and unmusical', and only agreed to begin composition when Diaghilev doubled his fee. Once again he objected to Nijinsky's choreography, deeming it 'hideous', though the score, composed at breakneck speed in the summer of 1912, ranks among his greatest.

Both works are essentially about desire, and their sensuality is heightened here not only by their juxtaposition but by the dark warmth of Les Siècles' period-instrument sound and the restrained intensity of Roth's interpretations. Played by Marion Ralinourt on a 1900 Lot flute, the opening of *Faune* sounds very sultry, even husky, and the performance becomes really suggestive later on as the flutes sigh and moan over the principal string melody, before dying languidly away. So much has been written about the complex modernity of *Jeux*, meanwhile, that we tend to forget how closely Debussy adhered to Diaghilev's request that the score should be in essence a scherzo-cum-waltz. Roth conducts it with an appealing lilt, immaculately judging its ebb and flow while remaining all the while alert to its constant changes in tempo. The sudden jolts out of triple time, suggesting the girls' jealous rivalry for the boy, are barbed and witty, and there's a real surge of passion at the climactic three-way embrace, marked 'violent' in the score.

It's a wonderfully persuasive performance, as is Roth's account of *Nocturnes* that follows it. 'Nuages', with its mournful cor anglais and drifting textures, sounds very disconsolate here. 'Fêtes', all garish brilliance and light, is played with terrific agility. 'Sirènes', meanwhile, is exceptionally beautiful, even serene, in its warmth and depth, and the women's voices from *Les Cris de Paris* are exquisitely integrated into the textures rather than seeming detached, as is sometimes the case. The recording, made in the Philharmonie de Paris in January, is finely engineered, though the close miking of Ralinourt in *Faune* captures some in-breaths and occasional key clatter.

The disc comes with a tremendous bonus DVD, co-produced by France Télévisions and Radio Nacional de España, of Roth and Les Siècles in concert during this year's International Festival of Music and Dance in Grenada. The programme is much the same, though *Faune* has been replaced by the *Marche écossaise sur un thème populaire*.

The Grenada *Jeux* is more relaxed than its Parisian counterpart, and the playing is, if anything, even more subtly refined. *Nocturnes*, in contrast, has greater urgency, particularly in 'Sirènes', which is altogether darker and more turbulent in mood on DVD than on disc. It's a wonderful issue and another outstanding addition to Harmonia Mundi's excellent series.

Tim Ashley

Debussy • Ligeti • R Strauss

Debussy *Jeux* **Ligeti** *Melodien*

R Strauss *Schlagobers* – Suite, Op 70a

Suisse Romande Orchestra / Jonathan Nott

Pentatone © PTC5186 721 (73' • DDD/DSD)



In 1941 Richard Strauss devised five suggested 'Programmes of

my works'. Among them was a 'light programme' that included the *Schlagobers* Suite alongside such works as the *Schweigsame Frau* Potpourri and *Till Eulenspiegel*. One wonders what he'd have made, then, of this programme dreamt up by Jonathan Nott. The booklet note cleverly identifies certain 'elective affinities' between Strauss's score and the works by Debussy and Ligeti, but it's a shame we don't get to hear the conductor's own reasoning.

Either way, one can only welcome a new recording of the Suite from what must be Strauss's most maligned major work – a misguided 1924 ballet about frivolity and excess that a Vienna brought to its knees by hyperinflation found difficult to stomach. It's certainly not top-drawer music but shows Strauss in fluent, reasonably effective form. And this new, clear and light-footed recording helps to hide its excesses, with Nott (and Pentatone's engineers) preventing the work's arteries from clogging up. There's outstanding solo work, not least from the flute in the 'Dance of the Tea Leaves', and Nott's players make light work of the not inconsiderable challenges of the 'Leaping Dance' that follows the 'Dance of the Small Pralines' – such movement titles give an idea of the slightness of Strauss's own scenario.

In general it's better played and recorded than Neeme Järvi's Detroit recording (Chandos, 9/98), and more refined, if perhaps less theatrical, than Karl Anton Rickenbacher's account with the Bamberg Symphony (Koch Schwann, 12/01; Järvi includes an 'Introduction', incidentally, that is missing from both other recordings). This new account also has the advantage –

to me, anyway – of placing the work within an unexpected context, which forces one to hear the music a little differently. And the couplings are also beautifully performed. The Debussy – a work set to a scenario every bit as frivolous as Strauss's – is beautifully unrushed and clear. The Ligeti is expert, authoritative and properly disquieting – as one would expect from a conductor with a track record like Nott's. A fascinating, surprising and revealing programme. **Hugo Shirley**

Dvořák • Suk

Dvořák Violin Concerto, Op 53 B96 **Suk** Fantasy, Op 24. Liebeslied, Op 7 No 1 (arr Koncz)
Eldbjørg Hemsing *vn* **Antwerp Symphony Orchestra / Alan Buribayev**
BIS (F) BIS2246 (63' • DDD/DSD)



Try this disc in reverse order. Stephan Koncz has arranged Josef Suk's *Liebeslied* for violin and orchestra, and it's a seductive introduction to the disc's strengths: spotlighting the gleaming, high-calorie tone and expressive phrasing of the young Norwegian violinist Eldbjørg Hemsing against swathes of deep orchestral velvet from the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra under Alan Buribayev. This is Hemsing's second CD; and while David Gutman, reviewing the first (5/18), didn't feel that her sound was quite right for Shostakovich, he conceded that it was 'ideally suited to big-hearted Romantic fare'.

Well, here it is, and if that *Liebeslied* doesn't go straight on to Classic FM's late-night rotation, I don't know what will. Next, try Suk's splendid G minor Fantasy, a single-movement concerto by any other name. Buribayev launches it in swashbuckling style amid a spray of cymbals and triangle. Hemsing matches him with a big, exuberant, heart-on-sleeve performance in which the fact that the recording places her unavoidably front and centre – and the slight muzziness of the orchestral sound that comes as a consequence of that – is offset by the ebullience and tautness of the overall reading.

So that's basically what you're getting here: big, upfront readings with undeniably attractive solo playing supported by extrovert conducting and an orchestra which, while responsive, is very much a secondary part of the sonic picture. Now apply that over the 32 minutes of Dvořák's Concerto. It sounds fine; the spirit of everyone present is certainly willing, and

there's an enjoyable tingle to the way Hemsing points the finale's furiant rhythms. A polished and confident performance. But now consider that Christian Tetzlaff has recently recorded this same basic coupling and ... well, you see the problem. **Richard Bratby**

Dvořák – selected comparison:

Tetzlaff, Helsinki PO, Storgårds

(3/16) (ONDI) ODE1279-5

Hesketh

In ictu oculi. Knotted Tongues.
Of Time and Disillusionment
BBC National Orchestra of Wales /
Christoph-Mathias Mueller
Paladino (F) PMR0092 (55' • DDD)



Kenneth Hesketh (b1968) is one of Britain's finest composers and (at the Royal College of Music) teachers. His 50th birthday was not exactly celebrated to the rafters but this beautifully played and produced collection of three of his most recent orchestral works from the BBC National Orchestra of Wales goes some way in making amends. Together, they give a very cogent view of Hesketh's stature as a composer, his current expressive concerns and the sheer vivacity of his orchestral writing.

The works are presented in chronological sequence, opening with *Knotted Tongues* (2012, rev 2014), originally written for *Gramophone's* Orchestra of the Year, the Seattle Symphony. A tight-knit, fast-moving fantasia, its title derives from Benson Bobrick's book on the history of stammering, and sufferers' fear of 'the anticipation of the glottal catastrophe'. The music's vigorous, hard-hitting momentum also relates to the composer's longstanding fascination with the notion of the 'unreliable machine' and the implications of malfunction – a mechanical stammer, perhaps.

Not that Hesketh's music stammers or breaks down, however. The innate fluency that all his scores feature is showcased particularly strongly in the five-movement chamber-orchestral suite *Of Time and Disillusionment* (2016). For those unfamiliar with Hesketh's music, this unusually compelling musical fabric may be the place to start, at its heart an enchanting evocation of a *petite sonnerie*. The concern with time and its passing recurs in *In ictu oculi* ('In the blink of an eye'; 2017), a set of three meditations (separated by two brief interludes, entitled 'Steal'). Originally

composed for wind band, this full-orchestral expansion – made for this recording – is one of the composer's most vivid creations. With terrific sound and performances (expertly directed by Christoph-Mathias Mueller), this is very strongly recommended. **Guy Rickards**

Ireland

A Downland Suite. Julius Caesar.

The Overlanders

Royal Scottish National Orchestra / Martin Yates
Dutton Epoch (F) CDLX7353 (80' • DDD/DSD)



Written as a test piece for the 1932 National Brass Band Championships of Great Britain, John Ireland's *A Downland Suite* remains one of his most delightfully melodious and big-hearted creations, boasting a particularly glorious slow movement (Elegy) whose memorable main theme returns in stirring fashion towards the work's close. Nine years later, Ireland adapted the Elegy and third-movement Minuet for string orchestra; and, in 1978, the composer's pupil, Geoffrey Bush, completed his arrangement of all four movements. Now Martin Yates is the first to transcribe the work for full symphony orchestra. A decent job he's made of it, too, though the dollops of side drum and cymbal in the Prelude and Rondo finale (following the example of Ireland's original instrumentation) may strike some (myself included) as a bit too much of a good thing.

In September 1942 Ireland was given just 10 days to come up with some incidental music for a BBC radio production of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, a task he found far from congenial. Graham Parlett has gone back to the fragments housed in the British Library but – despite the skill with which Ireland deploys his limited forces as well as some occasional flashes of sparky invention in, say, the Overture, 'Lupercalia Music' and concluding 'Funeral Music' – not even his formidable editorial skills can make it seem anything other than a frustratingly bitty sequence.

Happily, *The Overlanders* is an entirely different proposition. Parlett's magnificent restoration of Ireland's 1946 film score in its entirety excitingly complements Charles Mackerras's five-movement concert suite and Geoffrey Bush's effective reworking of material published as *Two Symphonic Studies* (both were recorded by Boult and the LPO for Lyrita, 5/07 and 6/07). Aficionados will enjoy spotting various thematic and stylistic fingerprints: the plaintive cor anglais tune

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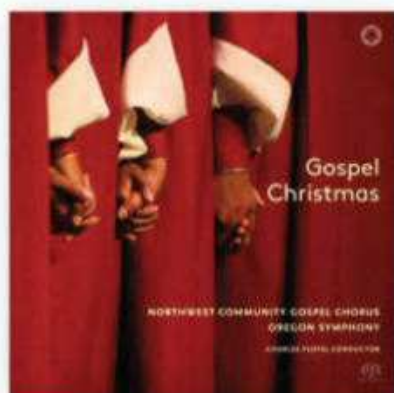
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in 'Departure of Ship' – the sole cue in the composer's own hand – harks back to the haunting 1930 *Legend* for piano and orchestra; and the gorgeous 'Love Theme' emerges as a close cousin to the lyrical second subject in the Prelude of *A Downland Suite*. Elsewhere there's plenty of satisfyingly gritty and muscular inspiration, not to mention a pleasing sense of spectacle, in 'Mountain Crossing' and 'Water Stampede' (superbly roistering horns). It's fascinating, too, to read in Parlett's copious annotation that both 'Catching the Brumbies' and 'Breaking the Brumbies' were in fact orchestrated by Alan Rawsthorne, and that Roy Douglas assisted Ernest Irving (conductor of the original soundtrack with the Philharmonia) in the scoring of 'Night Stampede'.

Enthusiastic performances from the RSNO under Martin Yates's baton, vividly captured in turn by the Dutton microphones. Fans of the composer and film-music buffs alike needn't hold back.

Andrew Achenbach

Kusser

Six French Overtures

Musica Aeterna Bratislava; Les Menus Plaisirs / Peter Zajicek

Christophorus © CHR77429 (78' • DDD)

Recorded 1993, from K617 K617032



Lovers of obscure but worthwhile Baroque music roll up! That is, unless

you bought this disc when it first came out on the K617 label 25 years ago. *Gramophone* didn't review it that time round, so it's good to get this chance to welcome it back. Born in Pressburg (today's Bratislava) in 1660, Johann Sigismund Kusser moved with his family to Stuttgart in his teens, and may have spent some time in Paris (there's no actual proof) before working in Brunswick, Hamburg, Nuremberg, Augsburg, Stuttgart again and finally Dublin, where he died in 1721. The Paris connection is important, as is the number of places he worked, for by far the majority of references to Kusser in the history books have him as one of the first German composers to write suites in the French style (or, as they are also called, 'ouverture-suites'). Even if he had only claimed to have worked with Lully in Paris, one can well imagine that he was considered a useful expert in the growing number of German courts that were desperate to acquire the fashionable French manner. And although it is Muffat who is

usually associated with importing the French style into German-speaking lands, the 1682 publication from which Kusser's suites 'suivant la méthode françoise' come precedes Muffat's *Florilegium* collection by 13 years.

Here, then, are six suites, each with an overture and around eight to ten movements, and sounding as French as French can be. The dances range from the courantes, sarabandes, gavottes, bourrées, chaconnes, menuets and gigue you might expect to some older styles such as the branle and galliard, and are delightful. The performances, by a partnership of Musica Aeterna Bratislava from Slovakia and Les Menus Plaisirs from France, are elegant and stylish, and they know how to dance. If they do not pound with the energy that Baroque orchestras like to today, they are none the worse for it. Thanks, Christophorus, for rescuing them. **Lindsay Kemp**

Mahler

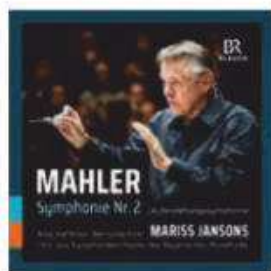
Symphony No 2, 'Resurrection'

Anja Harteros *sop* Bernarda Fink *contr*

Bavarian Radio Chorus and Symphony Orchestra / Mariss Jansons

BR-Klassik © 900167 (81' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Philharmonie im Gasteig, Munich, May 13-15, 2011



Invited to Copenhagen to receive the annual Léonie Sonning Music Prize in March 2018,

Mariss Jansons gave a celebration concert of the *Resurrection* Symphony with the Royal Danish Orchestra (the last conductor so honoured was Simon Rattle in 2013, and he chose the *Inextinguishable* of Nielsen). It's a work evidently dear to his heart, as it might be to anyone who has come as close to death as Jansons did in 1996, though the first of his three recordings was made in 1989 (Chandos, 8/90), right in the middle of his Oslo tenure, and even back then Edward Seckerson found cause to complain of a calculated restraint that has continued to mark his performances of Mahler and much else ever since.

Barely 18 months after giving the symphony with the Concertgebouw in concert performances that duly ended up on the orchestra's own label (4/11), Jansons did it again with his 'other' orchestra in Munich. In 2013 Arthaus released the film of which the present release is, effectively, the soundtrack. Bernarda Fink bestows a grave dignity upon both accounts. There are otherwise noticeable differences

between them in matters of pacing – always fleeter and tauter in Munich than Amsterdam – if ultimately insignificant ones, Jansons not being the sort of conductor susceptible to 90-degree swerves in approach.

Conditioned perhaps as much by the notoriously unfavourable Gasteig acoustic as by the collective character of the ensemble, this is a vividly miked Mahler Second, immaculately stage-managed and meticulously filled with local colour, also one that doesn't come close to painting the symphony's bigger picture. The numb but not impassive conclusion to the first movement's funeral rites, the *Andante* infused with a warm and Haydnesque spirit of affection, even the wild outbursts that precede the flautist's 'Bird of Death' solo in the finale: these are moments where you can almost hear Jansons throw some caution to the winds.

Cracked into action by sharply tuned timpani, the opening of the Scherzo promises a reading of satirical bite and luring phantasmagoria that never fully materialises despite a nicely pointed turn from the first oboe, some Semitically swung trumpet solos and a clarinet solo poised halfway between village inn and concert hall. Grotesque isn't a word in Jansons's expressive vocabulary. Among modern Mahlerians there's much more at stake in live recordings masterminded by Vladimir Jurowski (LPO Live, 8/11) and David Zinman (in the Zurich Tonhalle's anniversary box – Sony, 8/18). Anja Harteros is both glorious and gloriously secure at the long-awaited or at least intended point of spiritual uplift. Whether sung or played, the words are all there. But the accent, if there is one at all, is not Mahler's. **Peter Quantrill**

Mahler

Symphony No 6

MusicAeterna / Teodor Currentzis

Sony Classical © 19075 82295-2 (84' • DDD)



Anyone who thrilled (as I did) to Teodor Currentzis's Tchaikovsky *Pathétique*

will find distinct parallels here. The impulse, the imperative, of this Mahler Sixth is extraordinary – a headlong ride to the abyss with every rhythm and counter-rhythm fiercely articulated, every accent, every slicing *sforzando* grimly incisive. Inner parts pull focus as they have rarely done so before surprising even those of us for whom the piece is frighteningly familiar.

I expect you can sense that there is a 'but' coming – and for a seasoned Mahlerian like myself that 'but' was signalled right from the very opening. The soon to be inexorable march rhythm is for me too light on its feet. There is trenchancy for sure – I would not contest that – but there is too much that is upbeat about its tone given what is soon to come. Then again the quiet transition into the second subject – 'Alma's theme' – is really telling and the theme itself possessed of a vaulting but clearly misplaced optimism. I love, too, Currentzis's instinctive way with the rubato, the way he lovingly opens out the reprise with its descanting horns. The departure to higher regions at the heart of the movement is magical, too, cowbells and celesta and the conductor's expansive nose for atmosphere making the whole episode as eerie as it is beautiful.

We know now, of course, of Currentzis's innate sense of drama in all things – and the way he hurtles with such inevitability towards that mighty appoggiatura in the coda is absolutely thrilling. But better yet is his decision to adhere to Mahler's original order of movements, placing the Scherzo second (*pace* the revisionists, say I) and furthermore underlining his conviction by barely pausing for breath following the major-key assertion of the first-movement coda. The Scherzo follows virtually *attacca*,

thus making the point more emphatically than I've ever heard it made before that the Scherzo is effectively the distorted mirror-image of the first movement. The plunge back to the minor key is truly a volte-face.

This Scherzo's grotesque Ländler, with its yelping horns and growling tuba and basses, is something of a Halloween hop, the exaggerations writ large, the tone spooky and then some. Then the *Andante's* remote beauty makes sense as something more than just a soft-option contrast to the first movement. There's a real ache to Currentzis's reading of it – deeply melancholic in the Tchaikovskian sense – with all the plangent wind solos making their mark.

The playing of Currentzis's heavily augmented MusicAeterna is pretty hair-raising throughout and that fantastical opening to the cosmic finale is weirdly transparent – a kind of no man's land between Mahler and the jaws of hell. In this, his most personal crisis, Currentzis's headlong approach is unforgiving and feverishly exciting (just listen to those galloping horns in the final assault); but, returning to my big caveat at the start of this review, there is a very real danger of the rhythmic excitement, the thrills and spills of this reading, spilling over into something that is more exhilarating than it is threatening. What is missing here –

and all my instincts are screaming it – is that unmistakable but indefinable Mahlerian ballast, the epic depth and breadth of it all. The oppressiveness of this final movement doesn't really assert itself here until the final threnody of trombones, still the most tragic sound in early 20th-century music.

But, like every Currentzis recording to date, this one will divide opinions. I thrilled to it but I wasn't driven to despair by it.

Edward Seckerson

Mozart

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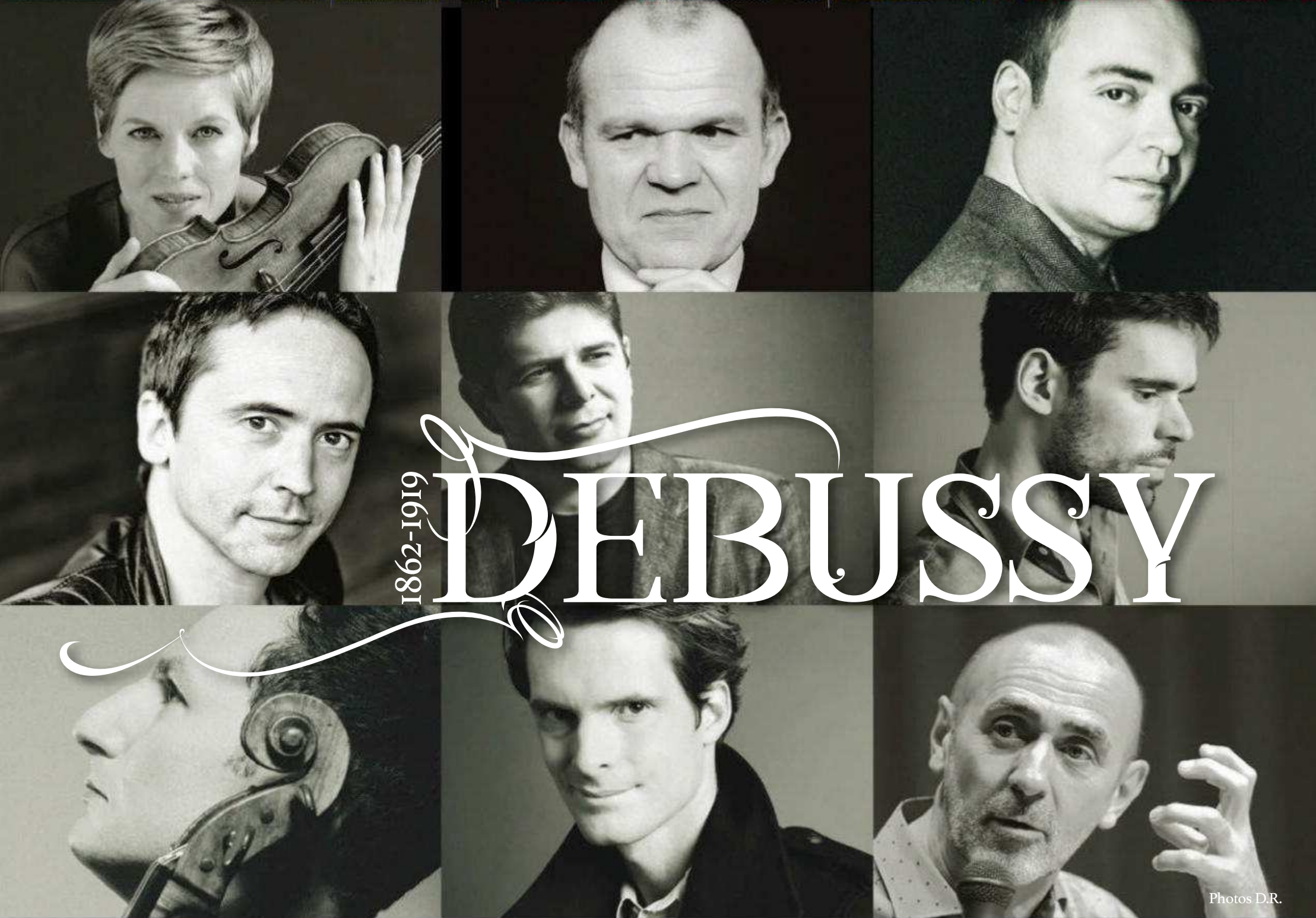
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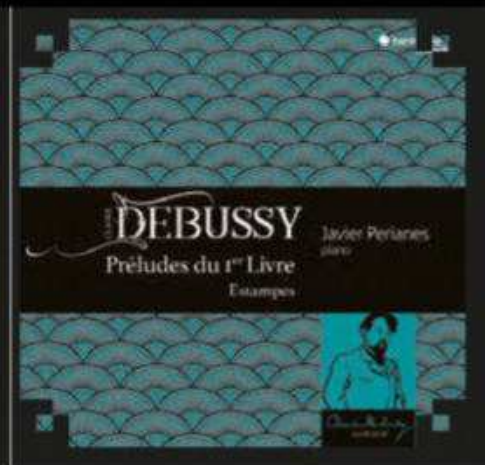
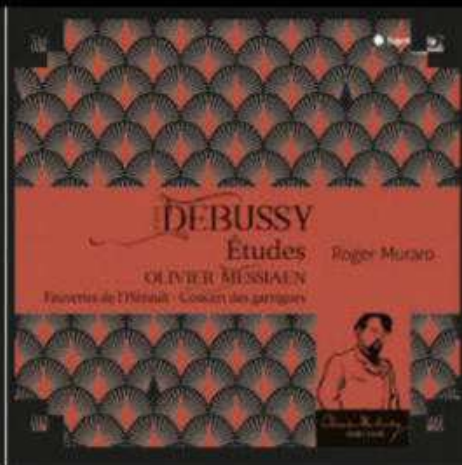
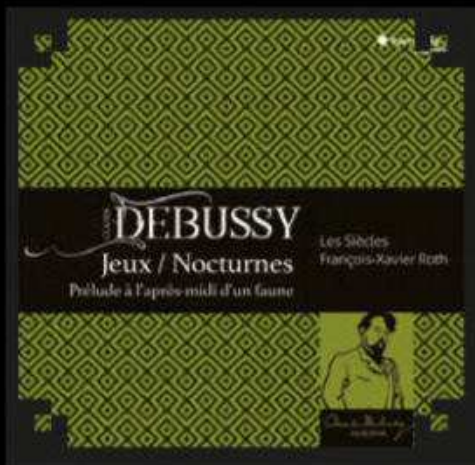


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favourite, the wonderful Quintet for piano and wind instruments from the same year.

The chamber piece is rightly popular but the two concertos don't visit the concert hall as often as they might, perhaps because they are overshadowed not only by the others from the same year but also by the heftier works of 1785-86. It's always a treat to be reminded of these works, though. K450 in B flat is all playfulness in its outer movements, while the central *Andante* forms its still centre, played here perhaps a touch slower than in other recordings but with a sustained, hymnlike intensity. K451 in D plays off its *galant* fanfare-like opening against tumbling contrapuntal string lines and concludes with a finale that gives its nursery-simple theme the full motivic workout.

Needless to say, as in the previous two volumes (11/16, 10/17), Bavouzet and the Mancunians under Takács-Nagy find an ideal balance between the light-hearted and the serious in these wide-ranging pieces, which were clearly composed to give Mozart a chance to show off his virtuosity as both performer and composer. The chamber interplay between Bavouzet and the four winds in K452 carries over into the concertos, their all-important inner lines brought out without a hint of self-consciousness. The conjunction of soloist, band and Chandos's characteristically fine engineering continue as they set out two years ago and conspires in a fascinating portent of what these players might do in due course with the later, larger, deeper concertos.

David Threasher

Rachmaninov

Piano Concerto No 3, Op 30^a. Piano Sonata No 2, Op 36. Variations on a Theme of Corelli

Michael Korstick *pf*^a Janáček Philharmonic

Orchestra, Ostrava / Dmitry Liss

Oehms © OC1896 (77' • DDD)



There is enough explosive playing on this disc to trigger a red-level threat

warning. Is it riveting? Intermittently, yes. Does it border on excess? Surely.

With more than 50 discs to his name and a repertoire embracing Ginastera, Koechlin and Kabalevsky, Michael Korstick is certainly a more adventurous artist than the Beethoven-focused image the German media in particular have thrust upon him. Nor is there any doubt as to his respect and passion for Rachmaninov. From creating his own version of the Second Sonata

(based on Horowitz) to pruning the *Corelli* Variations (as the composer routinely did) and cutting a short transitional passage in the finale of the Third Concerto (a good deal less than the composer did), Korstick takes a legitimately creative approach to musical architecture. There is a super-abundance of technical bravura too, and volcanic temperament. But if it's finesse, playfulness and magic you are after, then listen to Horowitz in the sonata (several versions, equally wonderful) and hear, for instance, how his second movement grows like a flower: constantly producing leaves and buds, while keeping its firm stem. Korstick's high-voltage, even fanatical energy might make for a great concert experience but as a recording for repeated listening it is ultimately more exhausting than inspiring.

His Third Concerto also makes headlines, but not necessarily for the right reasons. The piano's dominance on the sound stage, combined with the somewhat pale orchestral sound, virtually turns this into a concerto without orchestra, a kind of music-minus-one version in reverse. For anyone wanting to hear every single note of the piano part, this could be a useful reference. The trouble is that the dialogue between the soloist and the orchestra is almost entirely absent and the main lines of the melodic structure are frequently obscured. As with the sonata and the variations, if your taste is for tempestuous pounding, it will be fully gratified; but be prepared for all Korstick's overwhelming to become merely overbearing. For just as much fieriness and comparably kamikaze tempos, but all to far greater dramatic effect, stick with Martha Argerich's live account with Chailly. **Michelle Assay**

Piano Concerto No 3 – selected comparison:

Argerich, Berlin RSO, Chailly

(8/95) (PHIL) 446 673-2DH

R Strauss

Burleske^a. Ein Heldenleben, Op 40

^aDenis Kozhukhin *pf* Netherlands

Philharmonic Orchestra / Marc Albrecht

Pentatone © PTC5186 617 (65' • DDD/DSD)



It's been a decade since Marc Albrecht last released a disc of Strauss orchestral music on Pentatone. That was an often thrilling but uneven affair recorded with his then orchestra, the Strasbourg Philharmonic Orchestra. Now, with the Netherlands Philharmonic, and with a couple of opera recordings under his belt

in the interim (including a fine *Arabella* – 2/16), he shows himself to have mellowed. He and his orchestra offer an instinctively effective *Heldenleben* and, joined by the coolly virtuoso Denis Kozhukhin, a sprightly and persuasive performance of the early *Burleske*.

It's a fascinating coupling, too: the early work offering a parody of Brahmsian keyboard heroics (though not, *pace* Pentatone's poor booklet, his 'Second Piano Concerto in D minor'), the later one a wry commentary, in some ways, on Beethovenian heroism. In the wrong hands the *Burleske* can seem overly skittish and intractable, *Heldenleben* overblown and indulgent. But here Kozhukhin, making light of the awkwardness and difficulty of Strauss's writing, proves a brilliantly fleet and mercurial soloist: there's no shortage of heroics but his playing is meltingly seductive in the work's many gorgeous lyrical moments. It's a fine performance, and Albrecht and his orchestra back him up well.

Their *Heldenleben* is an impressive achievement too. There's plenty of vivid characterisation, though perhaps, in Pentatone's smooth engineering, a slight lack of bite in the overall orchestral sound. Vadim Tsibulevsky portrays a 'Hero's Companion' who is perhaps gentler than many, but there's no harm in that – although he's can't quite find the necessary steadiness of tone to crown his final phrase. The recording really scores points in its coherence, though, with Albrecht controlling the grand battle and triumph expertly, not scrimping on drama while keeping all its disparate elements together. There's a real warmth to the 'Hero's Works of Peace', too, and plenty to wallow in in the final section, not least some exquisite horn-playing. Recommended.

Hugo Shirley

Stravinsky

Jeu de cartes. Petrushka (1911 version)

Mariinsky Orchestra / Valery Gergiev

Mariinsky © MAR0594 (58' • DDD/DSD)



Bold local colours are pretty much a given for *Petrushka* with this orchestra and

this conductor in this location. But the vividness and 'authenticity' (not a word I generally use) of the characterisation took even me a little by surprise. Frankly it's been a while since a Gergiev performance captured my imagination. Barring the very opening pages, where a careless and slightly

inexplicable rhythmic sluggishness intrudes (exacerbated by the thicker, more elaborate scoring of this original 1911 version), there isn't a detail that doesn't pop spontaneously (or so it seems) from the page. Gergiev as puppeteer is so mindful of the music's folksy roots that the whole has a coarse-cut immediacy that is highly distinctive. You just have to get past the opening pages.

The 'backstage' tableaux are especially affecting in their intimacy, something Gergiev signals quite magically from the moment the showman's wistful flute first introduces us to his puppets. An atmosphere of enchantment descends from that point onwards. The Blackamoor's clumsy attempts to woo the Ballerina – not least his lopsided attempts to partner her in a waltz – would be charming if they weren't so sinister. The forlorn Petrushka's anguish (those frantic trumpet fanfares) feels very real.

And then we're back among the thronging crowds (and it really feels that way) of St Petersburg's Shrovetide Fair, the 1911 orchestration humming in a way that the sharper 1947 revision can't quite match. The dances here have a red-blooded rusticity about them, not least Gergiev's terrifically exuberant way with the Coachmen's Dance – and the lumbering bass-heavy episode with the dancing bear is vivid as can be, heavily redolent of Mussorgsky's Ox Cart in *Pictures*. As I say, broad strokes, but touchingly human, too, in the moment when the Showman vainly tries to convince his crowd – and us – that Petrushka is 'only a puppet'.

Switching to the neoclassical world of *Jeu de cartes* (recorded a few years earlier in 2009) should, I think, convey more of a 'shock of the new' after *Petrushka* and I have to say that I was conscious throughout of the angular nature of this music requiring cleaner, sharper lines in performance. But Gergiev attends to it much as he does *Petrushka*, slightly over-egging the characterisation and, to my mind, applying too much in the way of nuance and rubato than is appropriate in this piece. Stravinsky's dispassionate stylisation and straight-faced use of self-quotation (to say nothing of Rossini's *Barber*) should have a bracing air of detachment about it.

Thoroughly engaging *Petrushka*, though.
Edward Seckerson

Tchaikovsky · Scriabin

Scriabin Piano Concerto, Op 20 Tchaikovsky Piano Concertos – No 1, Op 23; No 3, Op 75
Xiayin Wang *pf* **Royal Scottish National Orchestra / Peter Oundjian**
Chandos ̢ CHSA5216 (75' • DDD/DSD)



Kirill Gerstein was the first to record the Tchaikovsky B flat minor using a new critical edition of the score (Myrios, 2/15). This was based on the recently discovered copy used by the composer himself, a revised (second) version of the original score and with numerous minor differences from the later (third) version made without permission, probably by Siloti, with which the whole world is familiar.

Yet strangely, though marketed as the 'original version', Xiayin Wang's performance does not register some of the most noticeable discrepancies – the arpeggiated chords for the piano's famous first entry, for instance, and the unsanctioned *molto rit* before the return of the last movement's big tune. Oundjian, however, in the slow movement opts for the original (and, in my opinion, plainly wrong) F natural quaver in the first bar of the famous flute solo.

Which is all a bit of a nit-pick – and quite at odds with the actual performance of this much-recorded work. 'Original version' or not, this is one of the freshest and most enjoyable accounts I have heard for a long time. In Xiayin Wang's hands and supported superbly by the impressive Scottish players and their conductor, the concerto takes on the narrative of a tone poem in an account of commendable brio and clarity.

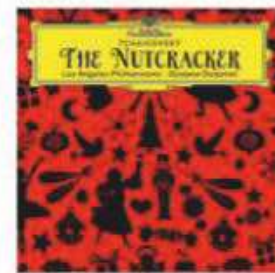
The same is true of the one-movement Third Concerto (up there with the best – Hough, Graffman, Werner Haas, Pletnev *inter alios*) but it is Scriabin's Piano Concerto, providing a welcome and unusual coupling, that elevates the disc into the outstanding category. This is among the most deeply felt and warm-hearted accounts you will hear, virtues it shares with Yevgeny Sudbin's (superbly recorded in 2015), whose beautiful handling of the slow movement's opening section eclipses even the newcomer. Heinrich Neuhaus (in 1946 with the All Union Radio Orchestra), despite some suspect tuning and ensemble, plays the work (and especially the glorious second subject of the finale) with unequalled ardency, but Xiayin Wang is the more accomplished pianist, Oundjian provides more coherent and detailed accompaniment and both benefit, of course, from Chandos's opulent sound. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Tchaikovsky

The Nutcracker, Op 71

Los Angeles Children's Chorus; Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra / Gustavo Dudamel
DG ̢ (two discs for the price of one) 483 6274 (90' • DDD)

Recorded live at Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles, December 2013



'Tis the season to roast your *Nutcrackers* by the fire. A year on from my mammoth

survey of available recordings (12/17), new recordings of Tchaikovsky's seasonal confection are ready to tumble in, the first of which comes from Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra. Actually, it's taken an ice age to arrive: this recording was made way back in 2013 in the Walt Disney Concert Hall, so why is it only being released now? The cynic in me suspects it's to tie in with the release of Disney's new film *The Nutcracker and the Four Realms*, for which Dudamel – with the Philharmonia this time – has recorded the (original) soundtrack.

Dudamel's track record with Tchaikovsky on disc is mixed. Edward Seckerson loved his 'sinewy, uninhibited' Fifth Symphony with the Simón Bolívar (4/09 – the finale is devastating), but Andrew Achenbach found his later disc of Shakespeare-inspired tone poems 'worryingly superficial' (6/11). So how does his *Nutcracker* fare? Well, the playing of the LAPO – and how welcome to see the players listed in the booklet – is fabulous, the strings as fine as spun sugar and the brass crisp in the Spanish Dance. The character dances are well drilled, the Arabian Dance seductively paced (much slower than my top picks last Yuletide, Valery Gergiev and Neeme Järvi). The percussion are prominent, especially the celesta – Orrin Howard's lovely booklet note quotes Tchaikovsky's letter to his publisher instructing him to keep quiet about his new discovery lest Rimsky-Korsakov or Glazunov should pinch it before the premiere!

The complete ballet comes in at 90 minutes, which is par for the course. But apart from a helter-skelter battle scene from Dudamel, there's a feeling that everyone is on their best behaviour: the Waltz of the Flowers has a lovely sense of lilt without ever threatening to spiral out of control; the Christmas tree grows at an urgent pace, yet is devoid of sparkle; the Los Angeles Children's Chorus sing with purity in the Snowflakes



Sweeping lyricism: Renaud Capuçon and the Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra bring luxury style and warmth to a range of film music – see review on page 70

but sound recessed and pale. This is a dutiful *Nutcracker*, but where is the magic? **Mark Pullinger**

Selected comparisons:

Kirov Orch, Gergiev (1/99) (PHIL) 462 114-2PH

Bergen PO, N Järvi (12/14) (CHAN) CHSA5144

Weinberg

Symphony No 13, Op 115. Serenade, Op 47 No 4

Siberian State Symphony Orchestra,

Krasnoyarsk / Vladimir Lande

Naxos (M) 8 573879 (53' • DDD)

Weinberg

Concertino, Op 43^a. Solo Cello Preludes, Op 100

Marina Tarasova *vc* **Musica Viva**

Chamber Orchestra / Alexander Rudel

Northern Flowers (F) NFPMA99131 (64' • DDD)



The premiere recording of the Thirteenth Symphony is a major event for Weinbergians. After this there are only three symphonies – Nos 9, 11 and 15 – that still await their recorded debuts.

The Thirteenth's long wait from the time of its composition (1976) until now is not exactly hard to explain. So abrasive is its musical language, so unrelentingly dark its moods and so uncompromising its technical demands throughout its single 35-minute movement that austere barely begins to describe it. For comparison I can only suggest the 13th (coincidentally) of Myaskovsky or the later symphonies of Schnittke (Nos 6-8). Kudos to Vladimir Lande and his Krasnoyarsk musicians, who square up to every challenge except for one chronically exposed passage for first violins, which they understandably depute to the leader solo. The future may bring more polished and richly coloured accounts but it will be a brave orchestra that ventures to compete.

If all this sounds terribly off-putting, there is a way into the piece, at least for those familiar with *The Passenger*. Weinberg self-quotes from three passages in his Auschwitz-based opera that accompany appalling events such as the hauling off of female inmates to their deaths or the title-character's reflections: 'Will people ever remember us? Will they remember our lives? Our torture, our suffering?' Knowing this – and bearing in mind the symphony's dedication to

the composer's sister, who perished in the camps – the wandering balefulness, lightened only by writhing agony, splintery protest, starts to fall into place.

As if to sweeten the pill, Lande offers the easy-going Serenade of 1952 as a coupling. This was actually one of the first of Weinberg's works to be released in the West (on a 1956 Westminster LP). Anyone who encountered that frankly rather feeble performance and its dreadful recording would have been pardoned for relegating Weinberg to the ranks of third-division Soviet tunesmiths, forgivable only because the Serenade was labouring under the late-Stalin-era yoke of more or less compulsory accessibility. However, Lande and his players manage to find considerable charm and energy in the piece. Admittedly its genial opening comes as a shock after the catatonic ending of the symphony, but no one could begrudge the orchestra this relaxation.

Composed in the summer of 1948, the Cello Concertino is another product of the fall-out from the anti-formalism campaign; its four movements are as modest in scale as those of the Serenade and as full of the spirit of song and dance. There the similarity ends, however, because the Concertino is as individual, dark and

specifically Jewish in its intonations as the Serenade is anonymous, instantly gratifying and generically folkloric. For reasons that are easy to guess but impossible to document, Weinberg put the score aside until 1956, when he recomposed and expanded it to twice its length, rebranding it as a concerto (premiered and championed by Rostropovich). The original score remained in the collection of a friend and was only premiered in 2017.

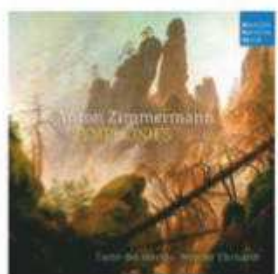
Marina Tarasova is alive to the klezmer intonations that surface most obviously in the Scherzo third movement, and in general this first recording makes a far stronger case for the work than its Moscow concert premiere with different artists. Perhaps it is the freshness of early encounters, but for the moment I'm actually inclined to favour this first, more concise version of the piece, and I would not be at all surprised to see cellists and string orchestras latch on to it with grateful enthusiasm.

In the 24 Preludes – one of Weinberg's more stylistically adventurous opuses, from 1969 – Tarasova has strong competition in the shape of Yosef Feigelson. But her range of colour and attack are equal to his, as is her ease in the most hair-raising passages, of which there are quite a few. Another unmissable disc, then, for Weinberg followers. **David Fanning**

*Preludes – comparative version:
Feigelson (NAXO) 8 572280*

A Zimmermann

Symphonies – B flat major; C minor; E minor
L'Arte del Mondo / Werner Ehrhardt
Deutsche Harmonia Mundi © 19075 85163-2
(60' • DDD)



Silesian-born Anton Zimmermann (1741-81) spent much of his short life as director of the court orchestra in Pressburg (now Bratislava). Maintained by the prince-primate of Hungary, this band was reputed to be among the finest in Europe and Zimmermann's 40 or so symphonies for it were performed across the continent.

Like so many of the works of the period that don't bear the names of Mozart or Haydn, Zimmermann's are now all but forgotten. Werner Ehrhardt points out that he was most active during the 1770s, when music in the Habsburg Empire was undergoing the major upheaval that resulted in the High Classical Style, and

that had he not died before the age of 40, 'we would now undoubtedly acknowledge him as one of the great Classical composers'.

Perhaps, perhaps. There is certainly an air of experimentation in these three works, as identified by Ehrhardt. The E minor instantly invites comparisons with Haydn; and there is a distinct tinge of *Sturm und Drang* terseness, along with a canonic minuet of the sort enjoyed by the older composer. The B flat gives a starring role to its woodwind section, and the C minor, known in some sources as *Lamentatione*, makes great play of a gobbet of plainchant – again, shades of Haydn – played on, of all instruments, a trombone, 30 or so years before Beethoven incorporated the instrument into his symphonies.

L'Arte del Mondo give the music suitable advocacy, playing with admirable confidence and accuracy. It's a jolly good thing that musicians such as Ehrhardt and labels such as DHM continue to explore and enhance our understanding of the more marginal figures of the early Classical period. **David Threasher**

The English Concert

Dall'Abaco Concerto a più instrumenti, Op 5
No 6^a **A Marcello** Oboe Concerto, SD935^b
Porpora Cello Concerto^c **Tartini** Violin Concerto, D125^d **Telemann** Viola Concerto, TWV51:G9^e
^bKatharina Spreckelsen *ob* ^{ad}Nadja Zwiener,
^aTuomo Suni *vns* ^eAlfonso Leal del Ojo *va* ^{ac}Joseph Crouch *vc* **The English Concert** / Harry Bicket *hpd*
Signum © SIGCD549 (69' • DDD)



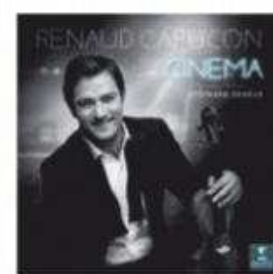
This disc is designed as a concerto showcase for four of The English Concert's regular members, and does a very good job of it while also introducing us to some unfamiliar but deserving music. The name of Evaristo Felice Dall'Abaco doesn't crop up too often but his *Concerto a più instrumenti* is full of life, mixing Corellian concerto grosso style with a French-sounding aria and chaconne, and a rumpty-tumpty finale. Perhaps it rambles a bit, but the playing here is so delightful, especially in the cleanly delineated duetting of the two solo violins, the sharp dynamic contrasts and the tellingly pointed inner-part details, that you won't mind. Porpora's Cello Concerto is alas not so interesting, especially in quick movements that display a fair amount of empty passagework, but there is a suaveness to the opening *Amoroso*

and some operatic scene-setting in the inner *Largo*. Soloist Joseph Crouch is both agile and expressive, though one might wish for sweeter tone.

Alessandro Marcello's Oboe Concerto is the best-known work here (it is the one Bach transcribed for keyboard) and is given a mellifluous and atmospheric performance with Katharina Spreckelsen as the warm soloist. The way the achingly lyrical slow movement creeps in from near inaudibility is particularly effective and I rather liked the oboe's cheeky 'spread chord' at the very end. Next comes a typically tricky but composed and poetic violin concerto by Tartini; Nadja Zwiener's violin is quite foregrounded here but does not suffer thereby, as the singing quality and nonchalant virtuosity of her playing (very assured in the frequent double-stopping) mean that it remains easy on the ear. To end, there is Telemann's Viola Concerto, perhaps a little halting in the first movement where it could have moved more smoothly, but nevertheless played with bold assurance by Alfonso Leal del Ojo; the finale certainly rounds things off with a flourish. Harry Bicket directs the orchestra with precision, clarity and plenty of useful ideas. A nice way to spend 70 minutes of your time. **Lindsay Kemp**

'Cinema'

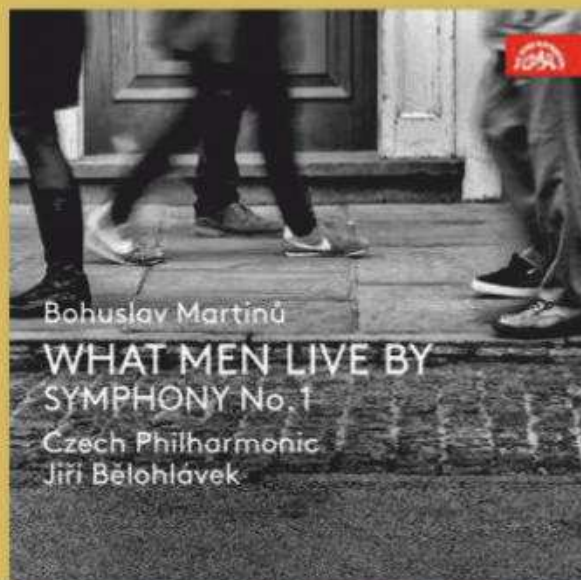
J Barry Out of Africa – I had a farm in Africa
Cosma The Seventh Target – Le Concerto de Berlin. The Tall Blond Man with One Black Shoe
Delerue Contempt – Camille **Desplat** The Twilight Saga – New Moon **Horner** Legends of the Fall **M Jarre** Dead Poets Society – Carpe diem **Korngold** The Adventures of Robin Hood – Romance **Legrand** Summer of '42. Yentl – Papa, can you hear me? **Mancini** Breakfast at Tiffany's – Moon River **Morricone** Cinema paradiso. The Mission – Gabriel's Oboe **Piovani** Life is Beautiful
Rombi Merry Christmas – Aria **Rota** The Godfather – Love Theme **Telson** Bagdad Café – Calling you^a **Tiersen** Amélie – Suite **J Williams** Schindler's List
Renaud Capuçon *vn* ^a**Nolwenn Leroy** *sng* **Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra** / **Stéphane Denève**
Erato © 9029 56339-3 (76' • DDD)



Theodor Adorno once said that 'every visit to the cinema leaves me, against all my vigilance, stupider and worse'. Despite Adorno's misgivings, films and their soundtracks have remained ever popular with audiences. This present collection – arranged for solo violin and orchestra, and superbly played by Renaud Capuçon and

BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ ON SUPRAPHON RECORDINGS

SU 4233-2

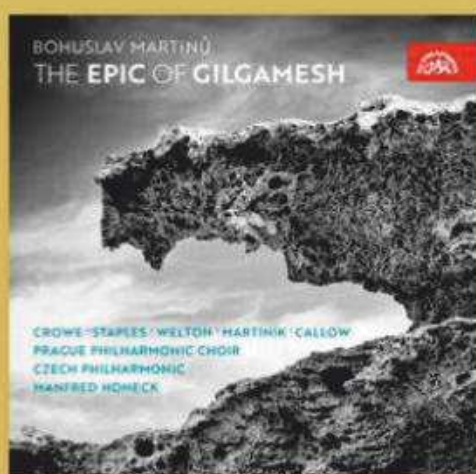


WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING OF THE OPERA-PASTORAL

*Jiří Bělohlávek's final word on the music
of Bohuslav Martinů; performed by Czech
Philharmonic*

* Presto Classical Recording of the Week

SU 4225-2



*The Epic of Gilgamesh sung in
the original English version on an
engrossing premiere recording;
Czech Philharmonic conducted by
Manfred Honeck*

* BBC Radio 3 CD Review of the Week
* Sunday Times Albums of the Year
* Diapason d'Or

SU 4220-2



*Bohuslav Martinů's Bouquet of
Flowers - rediscovered after
60 years by Tomáš Netopil and
Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra*

* MusicWeb International
Recording of the Month

SU 4237-2



*Bohuslav Martinů's complete
chamber choral works, recorded in
uncompromising quality by Martinů
Voices*

* Gramophone Editor's Choice
* BBC Music Magazine ★★★★★
* Diapason d'Or

SU 4198-2



*Cantatas from the Czech
Highlands: Bohuslav Martinů
returning to his homeland;
performed by Prague
Philharmonic Choir*

* Gramophone Editor's Choice
* BBC Music Magazine Choice

SU 4197-2



*The first new Supraphon album of the
complete Martinů piano trios in more
than 30 years recorded by renowned
Smetana Trio*

* BBC Music Magazine Chamber Award
* Sunday Times Album of the Week
* Diapason d'Or

SU 4205-2



*A great story within a single act
- the dreamy Ariane of Simona
Šaturová and Tomáš Netopil with
Essener Philharmoniker*

* Sunday Times Album of the Week

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

MORE GEMS FROM ICA

Rob Cowan listens to a bumper crop of 1950s radio recordings issued for the first time by ICA Classics, featuring some renowned artists



Memorable: Robert Casadesu is compelling in Beethoven piano concertos

For those not yet in the know, Lyrita's founding radio whizz Richard Itter supplemented his cache of English music broadcasts with radio recordings of the great and the good performing international repertoire. Happily the great proliferate here, and ICA's latest batch dating from the 1950s contains some gems. Top dollar for me is a **Robert Casadesu** coupling of Beethoven's Fourth and Fifth Piano Concertos, the former with Thomas Beecham conducting the Royal Philharmonic, the latter with the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Malcolm Sargent. Aside from cleanly articulated, pellucid playing and impeccable taste, Casadesu's Fourth features one of the most memorable accounts of the central *Andante con moto* that I've heaver heard, Beecham cueing weighty, godlike declamations from the orchestra, Casadesu responding

peacefully, prayerfully and with poetic eloquence. Elsewhere his playing is precise and finely tooled, even at speed. He plays his own cadenzas.

Sargent also takes the reins for a performance of Mozart's First Violin Concerto with **Yehudi Menuhin**, the orchestra again the BBC Symphony, Menuhin's playing typically warm-hearted though occasionally straining under pressure. This particular package offers us the first four concertos and the Concerto K271*a*, a work of doubtful authenticity. The other conductors involved are Leo Blech (with the London Mozart Players) and Alfred Wallenstein (BBC SO), while Menuhin offers us his own rather frenetic cadenzas in Concertos Nos 1, 2 and 4. Sincerity is everywhere in evidence here (especially in No 4) but for me Menuhin's occasional evasion of the note's centre can be distracting, his tone – though aimed with a passion –

sometimes sounds tired and the orchestral accompaniments are a mite heavy-handed. I'd leave K271*a* until last. Though fitfully lovely, from a soloistic point of view it's pretty rough overall.

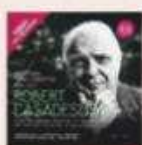
Turn then to Zino Francescatti in Brahms's Violin and Double Concertos (the latter with cellist Pierre Fournier) with the Royal Philharmonic under **Pierre Monteux** and you witness playing in a completely different league, elegant, vibrant and positively Kreislerian in its luminosity and warmth. The teamwork with Fournier is already well known from a fine commercial Columbia Symphony Orchestra stereo recording where the conductor is Bruno Walter (Sony Classical, 2/61) but with Monteux at the helm the bracing effect rather resembles Toscanini or Boult, both of them distinguished Brahmsians. The Double Concerto's slow movement is glorious (sample its closing moments), while in the first movement of the Violin Concerto Francescatti plays Fritz Kreisler's richly textured cadenza. These fine performances come as part of a four-CD set devoted mostly to Monteux performances, the sole exception being a very Beethovenian Haydn Symphony No 102 with the Boston Symphony under Charles Munch. Monteux is also in Boston for Brahms's Third, a work he never recorded commercially and which opens powerfully, though the first-movement repeat isn't played. Other highlights include d'Indy's *Symphonie cévenole* with the excellent Valerie Tryon, Casadesu again in Franck's *Symphonic Variations* (Boston), an extremely dramatic account of Chausson's Symphony, Debussy's *Images* – just as characterful as the LSO recordings, if less refined – and Part 3 of Berlioz's *Roméo et Juliette* with the bass André Vessières, which, although in mono, is actually rather better balanced than the stereo Westminster recording with the LSO from some years later. Vessières is superb.

All this confirms what we already know about Monteux, his directness and musical integrity; but, in the case of a **Bruno Walter** double-pack (all featuring the BBC SO), one performance in particular reveals an element in Walter's conducting that doesn't often emerge on disc, namely his demonic side. The work in question is Wagner's *A Faust Overture*, Walter's

performance in marked contrast with the pin-sharp readings of, say, Toscanini and Szell, stormier, elemental even, a perfect portrayal of Faust's character. You can sense that the man at the helm knows his Goethe as well as he knows his Wagner. The remainder of the set includes one of many Mahler Firsts that we now have from Walter, this one fairly typical in shape and expression (though the finale is more dynamic than most), a gorgeous account of Mahler's 'Wo die schönen Trompeten blasen' with Irmgard Seefried, a spirited Haydn *Miracle* and another Walter speciality, Brahms's *Song of Destiny*, beautifully performed by the BBC Chorus.

As to Brahms's greatest choral work, *A German Requiem*, ICA has issued a compelling version by the same forces under **Otto Klemperer**, with soloists Elfride Trötschel and Hans Wilbrink. As Richard Osborne suggests in his note, Klemperer was no slouch in this work and the overriding impressions are of urgency and contrasting moments of repose. It's an intense performance, intensely honest too, and leaves you in no doubt regarding Brahms's humanist message. The remaining two works are both minor-key symphonies: Mozart's No 25, its opening *Allegro con brio* as swift as Bruno Walter's (in Vienna or New York), their tempos being identical; while Beethoven's Fifth opens like Klemperer and closes like Toscanini, an astonishing transformation. The excellent transfers were effected by Paul Bailly. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Beethoven Piano Concertos Nos 4 & 5

Robert Casadesu

ICA Classics (F) ICAC5154



Mozart Violin Concertos

Yehudi Menuhin

ICA Classics (M) (2) ICAC5153



Various Cpsrs Orch Wks

Pierre Monteux

ICA Classics (B) (4) ICAC5150



Various Cpsrs Orch Wks

BBC SO / Bruno Walter

ICA Classics (M) (2) ICAC5151



Brahms German Requiem, etc

BBC SO / Otto Klemperer

ICA Classics (M) (2) ICAC5152

the Brussels Philharmonic – will surely persuade even diehard anti-Romanticists that there is much to admire about this important musical genre.

Capuçon works to his strengths here, favouring lyrical melodies that combine sweeping lyricism with expressive power and emotional depth. Andrea and Ennio Morricone's title music from *Cinema paradiso*, Nino Rota's love theme from *The Godfather* and 'Moon River' are just a few examples that display Capuçon's masterly control over shape, line, weight, balance and gesture.

The violinist holds back from pulling too much at the emotional heartstrings, however, allowing the melodies to speak for themselves. Saccharine moments are applied by Capuçon in soupçons rather than ladlefuls. The orchestra – deftly directed by Stéphane Denève – remains largely restrained throughout, providing a cloak around which Capuçon's violin circles and soars. And soar it does in John Williams's theme from *Schindler's List* and at the end of 'Gabriel's Oboe' from *The Mission*.

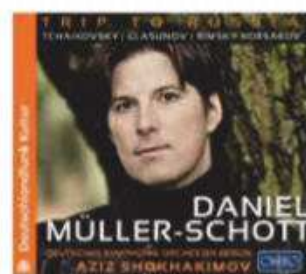
Yet it is those subtle moments that remain in the mind – the hesitant rocking figure in *Schindler's List*, which immediately captures the film's mood and dark message, or the ethereal, otherworldly ending to Michael Legrand's 'Papa, can you hear me?'. Capuçon's violin charms and beguiles in such a way that singer Nolwenn Leroy's distinctive voice sounds almost intrusive in 'Calling you' from *Bagdad Café*. More dramatic moments appear in the brace of themes by Vladimir Cosma ('Le Concerto de Berlin' and 'The Tall Blond Man with One Black Shoe'), but this is definitely a recording wherein the listener is invited to luxuriate in the warmth of the film's soundtrack – stupider, and worse, or not.

Pwyll ap Siôn

'Trip to Russia'

Glazunov Chant du ménestrel, Op 71. Two Pieces, Op 20 **Rimsky-Korsakov** Sérénade, Op 37 **Tchaikovsky** Andante cantabile, Op 11. Nocturne, Op 19. Pezzo capriccioso, Op 62. Souvenir d'un lieu cher, Op 42. Variations on a Rococo Theme, Op 33

Daniel Müller-Schott vc **Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin / Aziz Shokhakimov** Orfeo (F) C933 181A (75' • DDD)



'I saw the lilacs still in full bloom, the grass still long, and the

roses just starting to blossom.'

Tchaikovsky's words to his benefactor, Nadezhda von Meck, accompanying his Three Pieces, Op 42, could stand as a motto for the whole of Daniel Müller-Schott's disc, which in repertoire terms is something of a treasure chest for cellophiles.

The title *Souvenir d'un lieu cher* only appeared in editions after Tchaikovsky's death; he himself merely dedicated the pieces to Brailov (a town in Ukraine). Originally composed for violin and piano, and conceived during the composer's work on his Violin Concerto, these pieces became better known in Glazunov's arrangement for violin and orchestra. Müller-Schott plays the violin part here – for the first time, he claims – on the cello. The melancholic outer movements are perfectly served by the instrument and by Müller-Schott's warm tone. The brisk Scherzo, however, is not entirely convincing in its new, heavier garb.

Tchaikovsky and Glazunov alternate in the rest of the disc, their dialogue broken only by Rimsky-Korsakov's charming and unpretentious *Sérénade*. Müller-Schott is sympathetic and perfectly satisfying in his own way, until you hear, say, Glazunov's elegiac *Chant du ménestrel* from Rostropovich, who goes beyond Romantic plaintiveness into an epic statement of sorrow and pain. Having studied Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations* not only with Rostropovich but also before that with Walter Nothas and Steven Isserlis, Müller-Schott says he had to find his own 'personal approach'. That approach proves perfectly tasteful and solid but it is still not remotely a match for Rostropovich and Karajan's magic (like them he goes for the Fitzenhagen ordering, though in concert he apparently favours the original). If there is anything like *hygge* in music, the Berlin Philharmonic's rendition of the opening bars of the *Rococo Variations* would surely be it. Aziz Shokhakimov fails to elicit anything like a comparable range of velvety colours, and the unduly cello-focused balance throughout the disc relegates the orchestra even further to a subordinate role. **Michelle Assay**

Rococo Variations – selected comparison:

Rostropovich, BPO, Karajan (10/69^R) (DG) 447 413-2GOR

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Beethoven's Symphony No 7

Conductor **Philippe Jordan** tells Richard Bratby about revealing the human Beethoven

Philippe Jordan has never been to the Barbican before. My surprise must be obvious, because he explains that before last night's programme of Tchaikovsky and Mussorgsky he'd not worked with the London Symphony Orchestra either. Double surprise – though, of course, it shouldn't be. As Music Director since 2009 of the Opéra National de Paris, Chief Conductor of the Vienna Symphony since 2014 and Music Director Designate of the Vienna State Opera, how would he find time? He has been described as 'general music director of Europe', Karajan's old (half-joking) soubriquet.

We're here to talk about Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, though, and he dives straight in at the first *Vivace* – that Olympian sonata structure built on a single dotted rhythm. Or – as he corrects me – not. 'There are three rhythms,' he explains, pointing out the flute's basic version, at bar 63; then the moment at bar 69 where Beethoven articulates the final two notes with marcato wedges, and then bar 86, when the violins finally seize control and a semiquaver gap opens up in the middle of the group.

'You have these three distinct rhythms playing with each other, and playing against each other, and the most fantastic part is in the development' – he turns hurriedly to bar 236 – 'where the woodwind are playing one thing, the strings are playing another; it's actually a fight between the two rhythms. There are only two moments where the rhythms unify across the whole orchestra: the most dramatic part' – he points to letter H (bar 254) – 'and then once more at the end, where they're united. They find each other' (bar 423 onwards).

In Jordan's Vienna recording, that attention to rhythmic clarity is unmissable. It's not what you might automatically think of as Viennese style. And yet, he insists, it is. 'The Vienna players have a very typical Viennese sound: the vibrato, the sweetness, the portamenti (which you shouldn't do too much of). But they're the opposite of the Vienna Philharmonic, which is a more muscular orchestra. The Vienna Symphony don't feel they have to defend a certain historic sound. They don't have that burden, somehow.'



Philippe Jordan with the Vienna Symphony

'Monumental Beethoven is not interesting for our time – it's more interesting to find the human Beethoven,' says Jordan. In practice, that means a compact string section and an awareness of historically informed performance. 'We all grew up with Harnoncourt. Interestingly enough, in the Vienna Symphony we have a lot of musicians who've played in the Concentus Musicus Wien.' It means observing all repeats and taking Beethoven's once-contentious metronome marks seriously. And it means thinking anew about Beethoven's place in the 21st-century repertoire.

'We prepared ourselves for Beethoven with a Schubert cycle, to find a Viennese perspective: the phrasing, the melody, the melancholy. And then we played a lot of Bartók. I think there are lots of similarities between Beethoven and Bartók, especially in their orchestration, their radicality; in their use of folk music.' But we've already vaulted far ahead – and not even glanced at the *Poco sostenuto* introduction: 'The biggest introduction of all his symphonies!' exclaims Jordan.

Grabbing the score, he shows how Beethoven uses that huge A major musical space to establish the potential of C major (letter A, bar 23) and F major (bar 42): tonalities directly related to the A minor second movement and the F major third. 'He's trying to set out continents of tonality:

the symphony will be moving around, but it's all laid out in the introduction. And then we go into dancelike movements for the rest of the symphony. I know it's a cliché – Wagner's comment about the Seventh Symphony being the apotheosis of the dance; but unfortunately he's right. It's really about dance on the highest symphonic level.'

Jordan should know. He's worked at Bayreuth; in fact, he's one of few modern conductors to have followed the traditional career path of Mahler, Walter and Karajan – learning his craft as an operatic répétiteur (most notably with Daniel Barenboim in Berlin) before graduating to the concert platform. He's not ashamed to call himself a Kapellmeister, and he's adamant that his opera house work is the bedrock of his symphonic vision. 'You have to think in bigger forms, and not get lost in too many details. That's important in every movement of a Beethoven symphony. The more I do Wagner and Beethoven, I'm just stunned to see the similarities.'

'I sometimes wonder just how deaf Beethoven was. That melody is totally Rossini – third act of Barber of Seville'

In the Seventh Symphony, Jordan advocates the shortest of breaks – almost an *attacca* – between the first and second movements: 'It's about surprise, that A minor chord. It's such a Schubertian A minor, and that rhythm is such a Schubertian rhythm.' He hums the opening of Schubert's Impromptu in B flat. 'Of course, we know it's a rhythmic symphony so it's always based on repetitive rhythms. But we have to take advantage of every possibility of articulation.' The A major interlude beginning at letter D (bar 102) is, he says, 'very Schubertian again. It goes to paradise.'

In the third movement, Jordan takes the central *Assai meno presto* at a positively startling lick. 'It was very hard to get the orchestra in this tempo. But you have to, really: with all the repeats, it just doesn't make sense otherwise. I see it as a sort of folk melody. And the metronome, it's very fast, I think 84 or something like that.' He turns to the relevant page. 'Yes, 84. *Meno presto* is still *presto*.' You can probably imagine by now how Jordan takes the finale – though he notes how the long, seismic bass ostinato (starting after bar 367) that prepares the symphony's final blaze is prefigured by the low, repeated second-horn figure after bar 441 of the third movement, as well as the relentless bass swell that starts at letter N (bar 401) of the first movement. Long-range thinking underpins everything Jordan does.

And yet, still, he can't resist the music's sheer humanity – and, above all, its humour. 'I sometimes wonder just how deaf Beethoven was. That melody' – he singles out the springy theme that begins at letter B (bar 74) – 'is totally Rossini. Third act of *Barber of Seville*.' And then there's that astonishing coda, as Beethoven at bar 427 hits an unprecedented *fff* dynamic: 'I think it's the first one in all Beethoven, possibly in all symphonic music. It's very hard to get this out of an orchestra because they think they're already there, and then I ask for more.' Well, Beethoven does say *sempre più forte* (bar 393). 'And more, and more, and more', says Jordan. 'It's like delirium, like it's making you really drunk. You almost get dizzy. But there's something about this symphony that you just can't deny. It's incredible. It's the most joyous symphony that I conduct.'

► For our review of Jordan's Beethoven No 7 with the Vienna Symphony see page 56

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Chamber



Andrew Farach-Colton admires the Van Kuijk Quartet's Schubert:
'Their tonal blend and intonation are close to flawless, and they play with a fearlessness that is quite audacious' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 81**



Tim Ashley hears The Soldier's Tale as told by Roger Waters:
'Waters's lived-in, gravelly voice makes him a worldly-wise, wryly ironic Narrator' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 82**

JS Bach • Beethoven • Shostakovich

'Prism I'

JS Bach Fugue, BWV876

Beethoven String Quartet No 12, Op 127

Shostakovich String Quartet No 15, Op 144

Danish Quartet

ECM New Series © 781 7267 (78' • DDD)



Air from another planet: when the Danish String Quartet first encountered late

Beethoven it felt to them (as they explain in the booklet) 'as if it had fallen down from outer space onto our music stands'. This new release is an attempt to recapture that sense of strangeness, the idea being to use Beethoven as a 'prism' through which to revisit earlier and later music. Here, the Quartet Op 127 refracts a Bach fugue and Shostakovich's Quartet No 15, with the tonality of E flat as the common element.

The effect, on listening straight through, is unexpected. The Bach serves as a brief prelude, and the Shostakovich follows with very little break. The DSQ's pure, transparent playing immediately lifts the sense of static, oppressive fatality that can (some might say, should) hang over this work. It's certainly not that the group's playing lacks commitment: the strange, almost savage snarls that end their crescendos at the start of the second-movement Serenade are deeply unsettling. But there's definitely a sense of movement, indeed song, in even the slowest music. The ending isn't so much a fade into extinction as a question left hanging – to be answered by the opening chords of the Beethoven: jagged, assertive and destabilising.

It feels like a controlled discharge of accumulated emotional energy, and while the playing is exquisitely refined (listen to the sudden, luminous change in texture at 5'00" in the finale), this performance never loses its sense of rhythmic danger. These aren't warm interpretations; they repel as

readily as they attract. But they're thought-provoking, and often startlingly beautiful. And anyway, perhaps one shouldn't draw too close to this music. Didn't Beethoven say 'I'm speaking to my God'? **Richard Bratby**

Beethoven

'The Complete String Quartets, Vol 5'

String Quartets – No 5, Op 18 No 5;

No 9, Op 59 No 3; No 14, Op 131

Elias Quartet

Wigmore Hall Live © (two discs for the price of one) WHLIVE0092 (108' • DDD)

Recorded live, January 10, 2015

Beethoven

'The Complete String Quartets, Vol 6'

String Quartets – No 6, Op 18 No 6;

No 8, Op 59 No 2; No 16, Op 135

Elias Quartet

Wigmore Hall Live © (two discs for the price of one) WHLIVE0093 (102' • DDD)

Recorded live, March 7, 2015



I've been trying to put my finger on what it is about the Elias Quartet's interpretative style that's so powerfully affecting, and I think I've distilled the answer to a single quality: fearlessness. Virtuoso daring is perhaps the most obvious manifestation. The finales of Op 18 No 5 and Op 59 No 3 are absolutely brilliant – the former bubbling with joy and the latter suggesting the giddiness of an *opera buffa* overture – with the adrenalised energy sustained from first notes to last. Or turn to the Scherzo of Op 18 No 6, where they negotiate the accents and syncopations so deftly, and at such a clip, that the effect is akin to arrhythmia in a racing heart.

I also admire the unflinching way the players tackle even the most difficult, exposed passages, as in the first movement

of Op 59 No 3, where leader Sara Bitlloch makes no attempt to soften or prettify the high-lying figure at 2'12" and simply strides through with gritty assurance (and spot-on intonation). At every turn, it seems, the Elias put projecting the music's character above all else. In the slow movement of that same quartet, for example, they home in on its obsessive tone, not by being rigid or metronomic but instead through ruminative suppleness. The finale of Op 131 moves at a relatively measured pace, yet how desperately they claw its jagged lines. It's a terrifying reading, a more dogged journey than the usual wild ride – although this grim determination throws the consolatory lyrical passages into especially sharp relief.

The Elias are riveting, too, in the tumultuous *Allegro* of Op 59 No 2, seizing upon the score's many silences as avidly as the notes themselves, so that all the surprises are, in fact, surprising. Listen at 1'42", where Beethoven suddenly makes the pulse unclear; it's clearly meant to be momentarily disorienting, and that's exactly how the Elias play it. They're rather less convincing in the first movement of Op 135, however. On the page, at least, this music also moves in fits and starts, but in this case the various pieces need to be fitted together rather than chopped apart. It's the only disappointment in these two volumes, and the Elias redeem themselves with a reading of the slow movement that rivals the sublimity of the Busch Quartet's reference recording (Warner Classics, 2/16). Sara Bitlloch applies portamento strategically (and memorably) throughout these performances, but the way she slides through the opening phrases here is especially exquisite.

Indeed, all of the slow movements are extraordinary. Note, for example, the fluttering accompaniment in the third variation of Op 18 No 5's *Andante cantabile*, so gorgeously delicate it almost upstages the melody (listen at 4'37").



Magnificent sweep: Christian Tetzlaff, Tanja Tetzlaff and Lars Vogt play Dvořák with tenderness and great generosity of spirit – see review on page 79

The *Adagios* of Op 18 No 6 and Op 59 No 2 are both broadly paced yet flow so naturally; there's not even a hint of beat or bar line. And the expansive fourth movement of Op 131 is wondrously elastic – the *Adagio* passage (beginning at 8'53") throbs with such gentle tenderness, I had the sense I was feeling the beating of Beethoven's own heart.

There's no question this is a Beethoven quartet cycle of remarkable daring and individuality. As with the previous volumes, the sound is vivid and immediate, and includes applause.

Andrew Farach-Colton

M Berkeley

Winter Fragments. Catch Me If You Can. Clarinet Quintet. Seven. Three Rilke Sonnets – Sonnet for Orpheus

Fleur Barron *mez*

Berkeley Ensemble / Dominic Grier

Resonus © RES10223 (59' • DDD • T/t)



Even when working with large-scale forces such as opera and music theatre,

Michael Berkeley's style and expression remain attuned to the more intimate nuances of chamber music. Perhaps this is because the chamber context provides such an effective vehicle for one of his music's most distinctive features – the often dichotomous interplay between the individual and the group.

Spanning over 30 years, all the works contained here explore this theme in various ways. The isolated individual is present from the very beginning of the Clarinet Quintet, with its yearning, searching solo melody. The music eventually gathers pace and is transformed in the middle section into a strident dancelike theme, taken up by the string quartet in dotted rhythms. Echoes of the klezmer tradition hint at an autobiographical subtext before the music finally returns to the solipsistic tone of the opening.

More subtle intensification of the 'subject versus the group' is heard in *Seven*, where a slowly repeating four-note figure appearing mainly in the harp shifts this way and that, between comforting consonance and uneasy dissonance, before finally resting on an E major triad. Mezzo-soprano Fleur

Barron represents the lone voice in the song-cycle *Winter Fragments*, while the idea is distilled further in Berkeley's restrained setting of Rilke's 'Sonnet for Orpheus', where the muse this time inhabits the creative individual in a strange, almost catatonic state.

Not every outcome is bleak or unsettling, however. *Catch Me If You Can* pits the individual against the group in a more playful, mischievous manner, with the outer movements foregrounding rapid flourishes which occasionally coalesce into strident unison melodies or climax in caterwauling shrieks. In the central slow movement an elegiac line is passed around the ensemble, suggesting a melody without a home. But maybe the point is that – despite one's isolation – music is that home. The Berkeley Ensemble, directed by Dominic Grier, are excellent throughout – entirely at one with the music of their namesake composer.

Pwyll ap Siôn

Dodgson

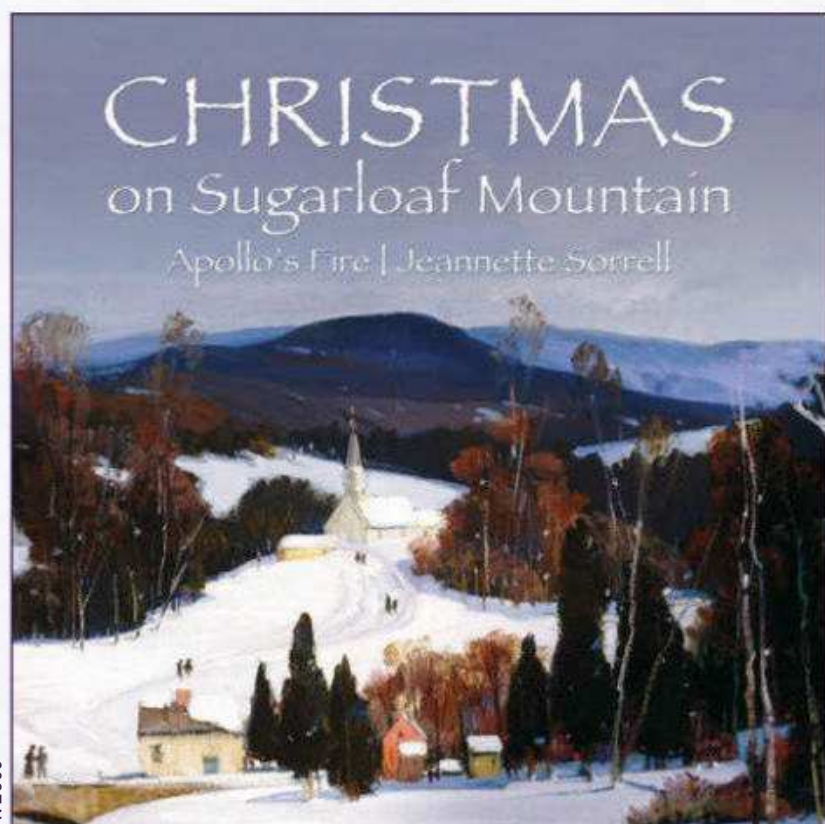
String Trios – No 1; No 2. Sonatina for Solo Violin. Caprice after Puck. Partita for Solo Cello

Karolos

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Dodgson

Capriccio and Finale. Echoes of Autumn.
Pastoral Sonata. Septet Variations. Solway Suite.
Sonata for Three

Karolos

Naxos (M) 8 573857 (82' • DDD)



Karolos are a dynamic, virtuoso chamber collective of first-rate players. These two discs – issued separately but together comprising over two and a half hours of Stephen Dodgson's strongly crafted music, beautifully played – spotlight their strengths superbly. The first features the string trios, punctuated by solo pieces for each instrumentalist; the second uses eight players in varying combinations, the largest being *Septet Variations* (1975) – for the same ensemble as Ravel's *Introduction and Allegro* – with only guitarist Craig Ogden 'on the bench'.

The BBC's broadcast of the First String Trio (1951) – with one Neville Marriner as violinist – was regarded by Dodgson as his 'first real success'. It is easy to hear why, the music beautifully laid out for the players, the melodic invention fresh and appealing. The Second Trio (1964) comprises three movements of increasing weight, the *Allegro* finale a compound form of three distinct sections. The Sonatina (1963) was written with Bach's First Violin Partita in mind but Dodgson's own Partita, for cello (1985), is freer and more modern in design, brilliantly interweaving eight sections, each developing material from the Prologue. *Caprice after Puck* for viola (1978) is a terrific variation-fantasy full of shade and light.

The six works on the second disc flesh out the picture of this genial, often incalculable composer, combining intelligent composition, harmonic acuity (always within a tonal framework) and beguilingly euphonious scoring. Dodgson liked to set himself (and his listeners) challenges, whether structural, harmonic or – as in *Septet Variations* – instrumental, combining flute, clarinet and harp with the quartet. *Echoes of Autumn* (1998) merely partners guitar with viola but the *Pastoral Sonata* (1953-54, later revised) and *Sonata for Three* (1982) satisfyingly place the guitar in a true chamber context. The latter is possibly the first work for the not-quite-Debussian combination of flute, viola and guitar; the lovely *Solway Suite* (1974, dedicated to Panufnik) restores the harp.

Both discs are an absolute joy, the performances little short of ideal, perfect in intonation and ensemble, lively and delicate as required. The booklet cover illustrations are by Dodgson's father (note that the caption for the booklet's ensemble photo misidentifies violinists Harriet Mackenzie and Philippa Mo). Recommended.

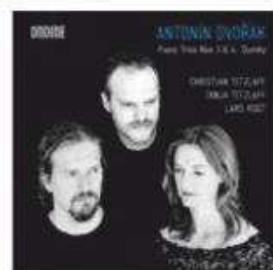
Guy Rickards

Dvořák

Piano Trios – No 3, Op 65 B130;

No 4, 'Dumky', Op 90 B166

Christian Tetzlaff *vn* **Tanja Tetzlaff** *vc* **Lars Vogt** *pf*
Ondine (E) ODE1316-2 (73' • DDD)



With some discs, the very first notes tell you to expect something special. Christian and Tanja Tetzlaff sing softly together in the quietness at the start of Dvořák's noble F minor Piano Trio (No 3) – cello and violin in equipoise, and proving with the very first dotted rhythm that they think and feel together too. Enter Lars Vogt on piano, and in that first surge he supports and carries his colleagues upwards: establishing, in barely eight bars of music, both the intimacy and assurance of these players' partnership, and the magnificent sweep and expressive scope of what is to come.

I'm no fan of 'all star' chamber music projects but the virtuosity here is entirely at the service of the music, capturing the full symphonic grandeur of Dvořák's vision without ever sounding like anyone is playing for effect. It's always chamber music, and it's helped by Ondine's lifelike acoustic, against which the focus and refinement of the Tetzlaffs' palette is never at any risk from Vogt's expressive generosity (in the booklet note, he compares the Trio of the second movement to Rachmaninov – and he certainly delivers).

Grandiose when they need to be, the trio find moment after treasurable moment of subtly shaded tone colour (even Christian's pizzicatos sound tender) – and you can imagine how that translates into the kaleidoscopic folk-fantasy of the *Dumky*. Staccato piano chimes its way over fading cello drones; melting violin lines float over translucent keyboard textures; the transitions are delicious; and of course, when the dances really start to fly, these players commit absolutely, without any loss of finesse. This disc sounds, and feels, like a recording born of love, and I urge you to listen. **Richard Bratby**

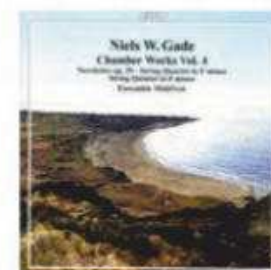
Gade

'Chamber Works, Vol 4'

String Quartet in F minor. String Quintet in F minor. Novelettes, Op 29

Ensemble MidtVest

CPO (E) CPO555 198-2 (54' • DDD)



Each issue of Ensemble MidtVest's Gade series adds to the stylistic and

taxonomical riddles surrounding the composer. While previous instalments have given us a mixture of complete and incomplete works, Gade's Quintet in F minor of 1837 is neither. We don't know if the single movement was meant to be the first of a number or to stand on its own. The easiest course of action is to nod along with annotator Finn Engeland Hansen's conclusion that it's surely a self-contained piece: a glimpse of Gade the radical.

Formally, it might derive from the Mendelssohnian dramatic overture (Gade's own overture *Echoes from Ossian* was his breakthrough work) and presents a picture of rhapsody as it devolves from forward argument into moments of idyll. It is beautifully played by Ensemble MidtVest's strings. Once more, however, Gade's most distinctive feature is his tendency to lathe themes that are more functional than inspired; they allow him to get the argument boiling but, paradoxically, can't sustain the heights of passion that result.

F minor was obviously a favourite key as Gade's only finished quartet (1851) uses it too. He all but disowned the score and therein might lie another narrative this cycle has thrown up: that Gade didn't recognise when he was at his best from fear of falling foul of the Leipzig rulebook. This free-form work doesn't satisfy the analytical eye as much as the musical ear but that counts in its favour. Expression wins (marginally) over Gade's occasional thematic pedantry. The lack of a real slow movement shows how much he prioritised keeping his music moving, Mendelssohn-style.

The disc opens with the *Novelettes* for piano trio (1853 but revised later) and they are among Gade's most charming works. The free-flowing *Larghetto* is a beauty but, this being Gade, all is not as it seems: he wrote and then discarded a sixth movement. Ensemble MidtVest include it here, if only to prove that Gade was right. The fifth closes the piece off thematically and with an unassuming

ending that leaves an altogether sweeter taste in the mouth. **Andrew Mellor**

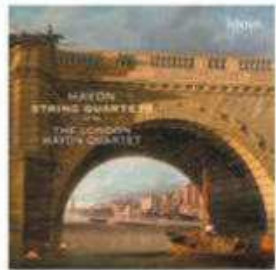
Haydn

Six String Quartets, Op 64

The London Haydn Quartet

Hyperion Ⓢ (two discs for the price of one)

CDA68221 (145' • DDD)



'He has taste, and the most profound knowledge of composition.' It's

supremely fitting that Haydn paid his great tribute to Mozart at a quartet party, and there can't be many chamber music lovers who haven't tried to imagine what sort of playing Haydn actually heard that night in Vienna – and what that 'taste' represented. The question comes up again with the latest release in the London Haydn Quartet's Haydn cycle for Hyperion. Reviewing the LHQ's Op 50 set in 2016 I found their performances 'civilised, carefully prepared and spacious to a T', and nothing here makes me revise that. These are period-instrument performances, played from an early London edition. Development section repeats are observed, and tempos are on the broad side.

The impact of these choices is most marked in the B minor Quartet (No 2). The LHQ's first movement is reflective and questioning, though I don't think anyone could describe it (as Haydn does) as *spiritoso*. The *Adagio* goes to some genuinely deep places and the Minuet, taken at low speed, becomes a lilting, bittersweet pastorella. Well, Haydn contains multitudes, and while the group's habit of stretching the top of a phrase gives the opening movement of No 4 a slightly seasick quality, it gives the brisker finales a genuinely improvisatory feeling. The finale of No 5 (the *Lark*) is often dispatched as a flashy *moto perpetuo*; here it breathes, and in doing so becomes a sort of gypsy dance.

Elsewhere, finales are crisply articulated with plenty of dancelike bounce – the final *Prestos* of Nos 1 and 6 being wonderfully buoyant cases in point. So there's plenty of character here (the performance of the undervalued No 3 in B flat is particularly coherent and engaging) as well as many qualities which, again, will come down to taste. You might prefer a sweeter violin tone than Catherine Manson's in the opening melody of the *Lark*; you might share my

misgivings about the pungent vibrato-free portamentos and you might wish that the group had let the exquisite slow movements of Nos 4, 5 and 6 unfurl a little more songfully.

But this is domestic music, after all, and perhaps a certain amount of understatement actually enhances the boldness of Haydn's invention. Hyperion's recorded sound captures that small-room acoustic persuasively while still letting Jonathan Manson's cello glow, and you do get the sense (more vital to Op 64 than the quartets that succeeded it) of this music being something understood between friends. There are bolder, funnier, more wildly imaginative accounts of this music out there but you never doubt the LHQ's sincerity, or the validity of their approach. Once again, it's a matter of taste.

Richard Bratby

Langgaard

'Complete Works for Violin and Piano, Vol 2'

Violin Sonata No 1, 'Viole'. Andante religioso.

Sondagssonate (Sunday Sonata)^a

Gunvor Sihm *vn* Berit Johansen Tange *pf*

^aPer Salo *org* ^aDanish National Symphony

Orchestra / Thomas Søndergård

Dacapo Ⓢ 8 226131 (59' • DDD)



Dacapo's traversal of Rued Langgaard's vast and unruly output continues with this

second volume of his music for violin and piano – featuring, as did its predecessor, a viable overview of this composer in his recklessness and increasing urge towards self-destruction.

Youthful ambition fairly permeates the 40-minute First Violin Sonata (1915), evident from the intense rhetoric of its opening movement or the Brahmsian energy and wistfulness of its Scherzo. The slow movement's emotional flights of fancy anticipate a finale whose overt fervency does not prevent its coda from decisively clinching the overall design. Incidentally the (mistranslated) subtitle, added in 1945, indicates this work could also be played on viola – a technical unfeasibility itself pointing to Langgaard's later impatience over practical matters.

Of the other pieces, *Andante religioso* (1950) is a miniature as deft formally as it is poised expressively, while the slightly earlier *Sunday Sonata* typifies Langgaard at his most wilful. By this time he saw no problem in combining movements from disparate projects, with the result that its

initial two movements, animated then affecting in a Schumannesque manner, are followed by an organ interlude of measured solemnity; itself joined by full orchestra for a finale whose ceremonial grandeur is summarily denied during those viscous closing bars.

Not that this fazes Per Salo or the Danish National SO, with Gunvor Sihm and Berit Johansen Tange as attuned to this music as to that on the earlier volume. Sound and annotations leave nothing to be desired, making this disc a welcome continuation of another Langgaard project.

Richard Whitehouse

Schmelzer • Kerll

'The Emperor's Fiddler'

Kerll Passacaglia in D minor

Schmelzer Sonatae unarum fidium

David Irving *vn* Laura Vaughan *va da gamba/lirone*

Hannah Lane *triple hp* Tommie Andersson *theorbo*

John O'Donnell *hpd/org*

Obsidian Ⓢ CD718 (55' • DDD)



If Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber's name comes first to mind when

contemplating brilliant 17th-century Austrian violinists, consider also that of Johann Heinrich Schmelzer, who predated Biber by a generation. The Australian violinist and musicologist David Irving made a careful study of Schmelzer's 1664 *Sonatae unarum fidium* before committing them to CD but he isn't the first; Andrew Manze recorded the six sonatas with Romanesca (Nigel North and John Toll) as long ago as 1995. Each of these recordings includes a further item: here the organist John O'Donnell offers us an impressive Passacaglia by Johann Caspar Kerll, Schmelzer's colleague at the imperial court of Leopold I.

To best reflect the regal setting for the earliest performances of these works, Irving has gathered together a rich continuo ensemble of four musicians and the resulting array of ever-changing accompaniments is evidence of their close collaboration. The exotic resonance of the triple harp and lirone (an instrument Leopold evidently played) add particular lustre to some of the musical textures. Indeed, as the sonatas are composed of sections rather than movements, the musicians have only the slightest of pauses between them to regroup. The clarity and warmth of the recorded sound is a pleasure to experience.

Irving plays with a certain seriousness and polished technical perfection that many discerning listeners will find admirable. If, however, you seek a freer, more improvisatory, rhetorical interpretation of this music, Manze's intimately conceived performances still have the power to enthrall. **Julie Anne Sadie**

Schmelzer – selected comparison:

Manze, Romanesca (10/96) (HARM) HMU90 7143

Schubert

String Quartets - No 10, D87;

No 14, 'Death and the Maiden', D810

Van Kuijk Quartet

Alpha Ⓢ ALPHA417 (59' • DDD)



The surface finish of these performances by the Van Kuijk

Quartet is astonishing, and particularly so given the quartet formed as recently as 2012. Their unanimity, tonal blend and intonation are close to flawless, and they play with a fearlessness that can sometimes come across as audacity. Try the finale of D87, from Schubert's 16th year, which the Van Kuijk take at a tear, the second violin and viola buzzing giddily through reams of accompanimental

semiquavers. It's a breakneck pace compared with, say, the Mosaïques' *Gemütlichkeit*, but then the Van Kuijk relax into the second theme at 0'52" and leader Nicolas Van Kuijk gives the melody such a charming hauteur that I was completely won over.

The slow movement of *Death and the Maiden* is more impressive still. There's the evocatively wheezy organ-like tone at the start, François Robin's affectionate shaping of the cello line in the second variation (graced by Van Kuijk's delicate tracery), the suppleness with which they all mould the obsessive figuration in the third, and the expressive impact of the tiny ornaments in the fourth when played in such a wistful, sing-song manner (Van Kuijk, again).

I am troubled by some details, however. The most glaring is the quartet's occasional disregard for dynamic markings and gradations. This is evident right from the beginning of D87, which Schubert marks *pianissimo* but which is played closer to *mezzo-forte*. More damaging is their mitigating the crucial contrast between *fortissimo* and *pianissimo* in the opening of *Death and the Maiden*. They also have a tendency to pounce on a sudden *forte*, holding back before they leap, as at 1'05" in the first movement of D87 and repeatedly throughout

D810, to the point that it becomes a distracting affectation.

There's no doubt in my mind that the Quatuor Van Kuijk are a brilliant young ensemble of enormous promise but I can't recommend their account of D87 over the Mosaïques – not to mention the Calvet, whose 1937 recording (Telefunken Legacy) remains unsurpassed – and if one wants a comparably incisive interpretation of D810, the Ehnes Quartet are less fussy and far more attentive to the composer's markings. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

D87 – selected comparison:

Mosaïques Qt (10/96^R) (NAIV) E8935

D810 – selected comparison:

Ehnes Qt (1/17) (ONYX) ONYX4163

Sterndale Bennett

Chamber Trio, Op 26^a. String

Quartet, WoO17^b. Sextet, Op 8^c

^{bc}**Villiers Quartet** (^aJames Dickenson, Tamaki

Higashi *vns* Carmen Flores *va* ^aNick Stringfellow *vc*)

with ^c**Leon Bosch** *db* ^{ac}**Jeremy Young** *pf*

Naxos Ⓢ 8 571379 (78' • DDD)



William Sterndale Bennett completed his String Quartet in 1831; he was 15 and

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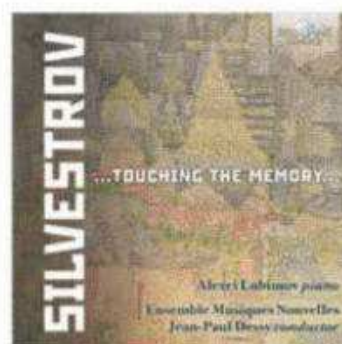
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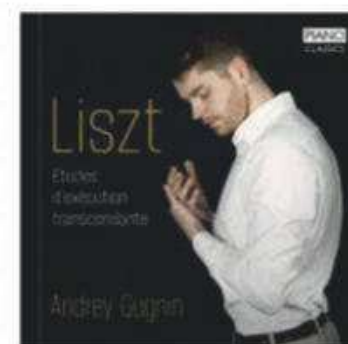
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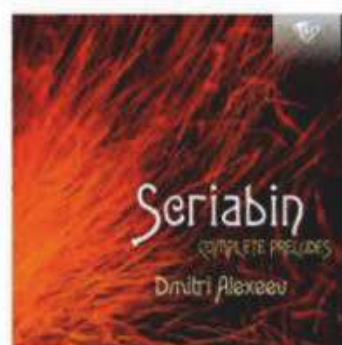
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halfway through his 10 years of study at the Royal Academy of Music. It's rather like Schubert's youthful quartets in the way it shows deference to Classical models while tentatively exploring a broader palette of harmonic colour. Listen, for example, to the first movement's startlingly brief development section (at 4'05"), where he pushes gently at boundaries. I sense increasing confidence as the work progresses (going on the assumption that he wrote the movements in order), with the finale being the most accomplished. There, Bennett effectively emulates Haydn's delight in musical surprises, while adding his own charming details, like the quartet's collective hoist at 0'30".

In 1833 Bennett met Mendelssohn in London, beginning a long friendship, and his Sextet for string quartet, piano and bass in F sharp minor (1835) reflects the German composer's influence. Despite an odd balance between the flashy piano part and the relatively sober string-writing, it's enormously more polished and engaging than the quartet. Again, it's the finale I'm most taken with; its songlike character suggests a turbulently lyrical Romantic ballad. And, finally, another leap to the Chamber Trio in A (1839), with its echoes of Schumann, whom Bennett had met in Leipzig in 1837. Here, it's the delicacy of the writing that's most striking, particularly in the central Serenade, which blends song and chorale prelude, the strings playing pizzicato over the piano's unadorned part.

I wish I could be more enthusiastic about the performances. The Villiers play with admirable warmth but are too tied to beat and bar line, and their intonation can be iffy. There's insufficient sparkle and playfulness in the String Quartet, here in its premiere recording. The Sextet is marginally more successful but outclassed by Ilona Prunyi and her eloquent Hungarian colleagues (Marco Polo, 11/94), part of Prunyi's survey of Bennett's piano music.

The Trio fares best here by far. Cellist Nick Stringfellow applies some lovely *legato con portamento* in the first movement and Jeremy Young maintains a light touch in the finale's intricate figuration. But if you can ferret out what I believe is a Swiss Radio broadcast of the work with Anton Kernjak, Hanna Weinmeister and Ana Leuzinger, you'll find an even finer performance still.

Andrew Farach-Colton

Stravinsky

The Soldier's Tale

Roger Waters narr Bridgehampton

Chamber Music Festival Musicians

Sony Classical © 19075 87273-2 (79' • DDD • T)



Rock legend Roger Waters, co-founder of Pink Floyd and creator of *The Wall*,

joins forces with players from Long Island's Bridgehampton Chamber Music Festival for this new version of Stravinsky's cautionary tale, the third recording of the work released in as many months to mark the centenary of the premiere. The text, Waters's own, is an extended adaptation of the English translation by Michael Flanders and Kitty Black. Largely faithful to its spirit, Waters keeps its rhythms, rhymes and half-rhymes but expands and frequently paraphrases both narration and dialogue.

The narrative is admirably clear and his additions contain some fine verbal flourishes. His Devil doesn't just provide the Soldier with Havana cigars to smoke in his hideaway but proffers 'Sobrani Black Russian, or perhaps, more exotic by far, / I believe we may still have an Egyptian hookah'. There are striking descriptions of the Devil's appearance disguised as an old woman, 'like a tinker in drag', and of the royal palace astir at the arrival of the man who will cure the Princess of her mystery illness. The downside, however, is that Waters's interpolations add a good 20 minutes to the standard running time and make the work seem unduly protracted and discursive.

His laid-back delivery of the text itself, meanwhile, doesn't always help, I'm afraid. His lived-in, gravelly voice makes him a worldly-wise, wryly ironic Narrator, though his northern-accented Soldier, nicely contrasted with the Cockney Ex-Soldier who persuades him to woo the Princess, could do with a bit more anger and frustration as awareness of the Devil's machinations sinks in. Some might find his adoption of a German accent for the Devil himself questionable, though it's clear he has great fun doing it.

Playing without a conductor, the Bridgehampton musicians are excellent. Ensemble is carefully focused, solos beautifully done. Slowish speeds make the Pastorale sound wistfully poignant. The Royal March is very flamboyant and the Princess's dances have a sinewy grace.

Made in Bridgehampton's Presbyterian Church, the recording is immaculately balanced, though sound effects have been added: we hear the tramp of the Soldier's feet on gravel; church bells and cawing rooks greet his return to his village; and an ominous electronic rumble presages the final catastrophe. It's not as good as Malcolm Sinclair and Roman Simovic's wonderfully taut LSO Live version (A/18), but Waters's presence will doubtless draw many new listeners to the work itself, which can only be good news. **Tim Ashley**

'In the Theatre of Air'

Beach Two Pieces, Op 90 Bowler Salutem

Musgrave Canta, Canta! G Rodgers York

Minster Tann In the Theater of Air Weir

Several Concertos

Marsyas Trio

NMC © NMCD248 (61' • DDD)



The remit of the Marsyas Trio is 'to inspire a generation of new works' for

the combination of flute, cello and piano, while 'uncovering lesser-known repertoire'. Their programme ticks both boxes in its focus on six works by women composers, the oldest of which are Amy Beach's delightful 'Pastorale' and Caprice 'Water Sprites' (1921). The other five composers are all British and the most recent item is Georgia Rodgers's intriguing if formulaic soundscape *York Minster* (2018), one of several inspired by the 'harmonic frequencies of resonant spaces'. Cleverly constructed, it sadly does not give any expressive feeling of that great building itself. By contrast, Hilary Tann's 2017 titular suite (though note the slight difference in spelling) is an object lesson in musical depiction – in this case, seven different bird species.

Also welcome is Judith Weir's early, thorny little masterpiece *Several Concertos* (1980), one of her many wry musical commentaries on the manners of music-making – in this case as a series of tiny concertos, one for each player (flautist Helen Vidovich takes the piccolo in the scintillating finale). The trio are thoroughly put through their paces here and in Laura Bowler's *Salutem* (2014), a specially commissioned partner work to George Crumb's *Vox Balaenae*, which is part of the Trio's core repertoire. The musicians are required to play each other's instruments and assorted percussion, to scream and take a selfie along the way!



From *The Wall* to *The Soldier's Tale*: Roger Waters narrates his own adaptation of the text to Stravinsky's inventive and evocative work

Thea Musgrave's brief opening *Canta, Canta!* is calmer but has a complex history, originating as a movement in her 1954 *Cantata for a Summer's Day* before being arranged in 1997 for clarinet, cello and piano; Vidovich worked with the composer in this recent transcription for alto flute. The performances throughout are excellent and involving, NMC's recording is a little close but naturally clear and the whole is complemented by a fine booklet note from the clarinetist Heather Roche. **Guy Rickards**

'Revive'

'Baroque Arrangements for Saxophone Quartet'
JS Bach Brandenburg Concerto No 3, BWV1048.
 Cantata No 208 - Schafe können sicher weiden.
 Fugue, BWV578. Italian Concerto, BWV971.
 Preludes and Fugues - BWV857; BWV885.
 Suite No 2, BWV1067 - Badinerie. Suite No 3,
 BWV1068 - Air **Byrd** Pavan and Gigue, 'The
 Earl of Salisbury' **Corelli** Concerto grosso,
 'Christmas', Op 6 No 8 - Adagio **Handel** Suite,
 HWV437 - Sarabande. Water Music: Suite No 2,
 HWV349 - Alla Hornpipe; Bourrée; Suite No 3,
 HWV350 - Minuet II **Purcell** Abdelazar, Z570 -
 Rondeau
Ferio Saxophone Quartet
 Chandos © CHAN10999 (67' • DDD)



The Ferio Saxophone Quartet made their debut on Chandos last year with 'Flux', an imaginatively programmed disc of Romantic and contemporary music written specifically for saxophone quartet (9/17). They're back now with a collection of Baroque lollipops, arranged by Iain Farrington, and it's hard to avoid a slight feeling of a let-down.

Not because of the playing, which remains superb; or the repertoire – only the glummiest of historically informed pedants could object to hearing Purcell, Byrd or Handel played by a group as good as this. And, at the risk of heresy, there are instances where the music gains from being played by saxes: the outer movements of Bach's Third *Brandenburg Concerto*, for example, definitely gain in contrapuntal clarity and colour, as do the different voices of the three Bach fugues included here.

These players also have a remarkable way of generating an atmosphere

through tone-colour: the numinous aura around the Prelude, BWV857, or the twilight colours of Handel's D minor Sarabande: José Banuls (on tenor) and Shevaughan Beere (baritone) shape their attack so sensitively that you could swear you're hearing a string bass and cello. There's a similar illusion of trumpet and organ in the central movement of the *Brandenburg*.

Huw Wiggin (on soprano) and Ellie McMurray (alto), meanwhile, are natural singers, phrasing supplely and expressively, though Farrington's written-in ornamentation can sound a little synthetic. Livelier numbers go with a kick and a swing; in all, it's an enjoyable programme. Why the reservations, then? Simply because, with a whole barely known repertoire waiting for advocacy, a programme like this does feel slightly like a retreat into sax quartet cliché – when the Ferio Saxophone Quartet prove with every note that they're capable of so much more. **Richard Bratby**

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Robert Kajanus

Andrew Mellor outlines the importance of the Finnish conductor and composer – friend, mentor, champion and rival of Sibelius – who founded the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra

In Akseli Gallen-Kallela's 1894 painting *Symposion* ('The Symposium'), it is Robert Kajanus who occupies the central position and draws the eye. Jean Sibelius, waning to Kajanus's left, would go on to change the course of musical history. But Kajanus was the biggest figure in the room and the most important Finnish musician of the decade: 'the master', in Gallen-Kallela's words and in the composition of his painting. By the time of his death 85 years ago in 1933, Kajanus would have spent 36 years dealing with the more bitter fruits of Sibelius's insecurities.

Kajanus must have seemed untouchable in the year of *Symposion*. His 12-year-old Helsinki Orchestra Association – the earliest incarnation of today's Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra – had come of age in style. It had been renamed the Helsinki Philharmonic Society and presented 11 performances of Berlioz's *La damnation de Faust*, each including 240 musicians. Finland had seen nothing like this event, presided over by an altitudinous wizard who cast a spell over his public. Kajanus was a maestro in every sense: 'proud, stern, and statuesque in appearance', according to the musicologist Glenda Dawn Goss, who cites his piercing eyes and ivory baton as tools with which he grew 'accustomed to being seen – and obeyed'.

Kajanus was born into a well-connected family in Helsinki in 1856; the music critic Karl Flodin was his cousin. He set out to be a composer, studying in Leipzig with Carl Reinecke and Salomon Jadassohn. At Martin Wegelius's music institute in Helsinki he first encountered the musician whose name the institute would eventually take: on May 29, 1889, Kajanus met Sibelius and heard his A minor String Quartet, subsequently declaring that he would no longer compose in the face of such talent. Wegelius warned Kajanus, correctly, that the urge wouldn't be banished so easily. Either way, according to his

biographer Yrjö Suomalainen, Kajanus 'was convinced of Sibelius's greatness and ... [assumed] the role of his faithful armour-bearer'.

In fact, Kajanus's achievements were more ambitious and far-reaching. He was the first composer to write music explicitly based on episodes from Finland's national poem the Kalevala.

He lured countless musicians from the Nordic region and beyond to Helsinki. His establishment of a respectable, professional orchestra in Finland changed the country's cultural reputation.

He was the first Finnish conductor with an international profile and became a pioneering recording artist as a result.

Sibelius stood to benefit from every one of those achievements. But he tended to think the worst of his friend after a messy episode in 1897 when both men were considered for Helsinki University's music professorship. Kajanus's ambitious streak showed its unpleasant side, as he harangued the university into reversing its decision to appoint the cash-strapped Sibelius, landing himself the job instead. Ultimately, we should be grateful. Sibelius was a lousy teacher and needed to focus on writing.

It was in Kajanus's concert series that so much of Sibelius's music was road-tested, both in front of an audience (one by which the composer set great store) and in the context of

established masterpieces and new ones. Kajanus aided Sibelius on matters of orchestration until the latter's proto-spectralism entered a realm all of its own. Sibelius hated admitting he took advice from his senior, but when the Helsinki orchestra was threatened with closure he was among the first to sing Kajanus's praises in protest. The two men needed each other, and they knew it.

Although his legacy is more nuanced and fundamental, Kajanus is remembered as a conductor. Right at the end of his life, already ill with the circulation problems that would kill him (as *Symposion* suggests, one trusty bond

His Sibelius recordings have priceless things to say about an orchestral language that was new and often unfathomable

DEFINING MOMENTS

•1870s – *Burgeoning composer*

Composes his first works mid-decade, including a cantata and a violin sonata

•1882 – *Orchestra founder*

Founds the Helsinki Orchestra Association, forerunner of today's Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra

•1889 – *Friend of Sibelius*

Meets Jean Sibelius for the first time, establishing a powerhouse relationship not without its troubles

•1889 – *Conducting student*

Travels to Berlin to study conducting with Hans von Bülow

•1890 – *Conductor of a Kalevala first*

Conducts the Berlin Philharmonic in his own Kalevala-derived work, *Aino*

•1900 – *Touring conductor*

Conducts the musicians of the Helsinki Orchestra Association on a major European tour, making his name

•1930 – *Recording pioneer*

Begins pioneering recording of Sibelius's works in London



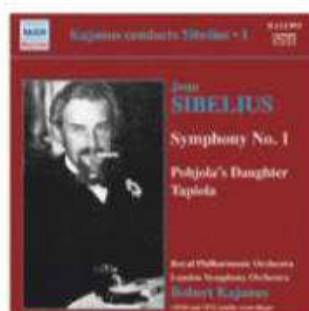
between him and Sibelius was found in liquid form), he was in London (in 1930 and 1932) making the first recorded cycle of Sibelius's symphonies and some of his tone poems with the LSO, recordings whose directional impulse and fortitude have priceless things to say about an orchestral language that was new and often unfathomable. Three decades later, recordings were still being made that come nowhere near these in understanding.

True to Wegelius's advice, Kajanus did keep composing. His guiding light was Wagner. His most famous work, *Kullervo's Funeral March*, combines that devotion with

a real Finnish folk tune. Another biographer, Matti Vainio, suggests that Kajanus really found his voice as a composer with his *Sinfonietta* (1915) – a score of lithe agility but not inconsiderable drama which shows that Kajanus had started

to distil his music much like Sibelius had before him. Thus he was always aware of new voices and directions in music, also championing works by Hindemith, Ravel, Prokofiev, Stravinsky and Honegger. He was just the internationally perceptive, domestically energetic musician that Finland needed. Would the country have become the musical force it is today without him? **G**

THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING



Sibelius Tapiola

LSO / Kajanus

Naxos (1/33; 4/74)

Kajanus's understanding of Sibelius's novel structures is fully in evidence in that most mysterious of scores, *Tapiola*.

Instrumental



Jeremy Nicholas enjoys Tchaikovsky and Mussorgsky from Barry Douglas:

'I don't know how long he has had these works in his repertoire but they sound like old friends, well played-in' ► [REVIEW ON PAGE 93](#)



Charlotte Gardner hears a debut album from Elicia Silverstein:

'Her flowing, gossamer-weighted and vulnerable-toned reading of Bach's Chaconne is entirely convincing' ► [REVIEW ON PAGE 95](#)

Balakirev • Glazunov • Kosenko

'Russian Piano Sonatas, Vol 1'

Balakirev Piano Sonata No 2, Op 102

Glazunov Piano Sonata No 2, Op 75

Kosenko Piano Sonata No 2, Op 14

Vincenzo Maltempo *pf*

Piano Classics © PCL10159 (70' • DDD)



I can already hear the sighs from Kiev at seeing Victor

Kosenko, born and

educated in St Petersburg but thereafter adopted as a true son of Ukrainian music, appearing under the banner of Russia. And more sighs still will come my way if I say that, despite his reputation in Ukraine and his undoubted service to the advancement of its music, there is little that distinguishes his Second Sonata from any averagely gifted turn-of-the-century pianist-composer, other than the fact that the sonata was composed not in 1901 (as a French review suggests, forgetting that the composer would have been barely three at the time) but in 1924. Frustratingly repetitive and predictable, this is at best a pastiche of early Scriabin (his Third Sonata), Rachmaninov and Chopin. Despite Maltempo's valiant efforts, as with Natalya Shkoda on Centaur, the value of his recording is perhaps less aesthetic than as an item of library reference.

Maltempo's eloquent phrasing and expansive array of colours are of a very high order indeed, and they come to the rescue of the other two sonatas on the disc, both of which leap off the page with unexpected vividness – unexpected, because they are so indebted to Chopin, Schumann and Liszt that any individual voice is hard to discern. Danny Driver and Stephen Coombs are more than estimable advocates for Balakirev and Glazunov, respectively, but Maltempo brings a special charm, flexibility and clarity to bear, and his Glazunov is notably better recorded. Glazunov's first two movements are perhaps not unduly

weighed down by their Brahmsian intellectuality but his galumphing finale needs all Maltempo's sonoric wizardry to make its academic routines palatable.

The Italian has already won his spurs in his Alkan and Lyapunov recordings, and whatever the intrinsic rewards of his chosen 'Russian' repertoire, it could hardly hope for a more eloquent champion. **Michelle Assay**

Balakirev – selected comparison:

Driver (4/11) (HYPE) CDA67806

Glazunov – selected comparison:

Coombs (11/96⁸) (HYPE) CDH55224

Kosenko – selected comparison:

Shkoda (CENT) CRC3109

Bartók • Prokofiev • Ysaÿe

Bartók Solo Violin Sonata, Sz117

Prokofiev Solo Violin Sonata, Op 115

Ysaÿe Solo Violin Sonatas, Op 27 – No 2; No 3

Franziska Pietsch *vn*

Audite © AUDITE97 758 (64' • DDD)



Franziska Pietsch truly takes ownership of Bartók's Solo Sonata. Her interpretation is

prompted by the idea of his 'explosive seriousness', a notion that fans the flames of her performance, especially in the opening Chaconne and the Fugue that follows, where the voicing has an orchestral dynamism about it. The Chaconne leavens anger with moments of profound repose, always spinning the illusion that this isn't Bartók's music but Pietsch's own, that we just happened to walk in while she was in the throes of spontaneous creation. That's the effect but the truth is rather more subtle, a carefully wrought structure that's never jemmied out of shape. The Melodia is beautifully phrased; the closing Presto a frenzied will-o'-the-wisp where the quarter-tones are an integrated part of the narrative. So often they sound accidental rather than colouristic.

It's fair to say that Bartók's Sonata is the principal draw here but the second of Ysaÿe's Solo Sonatas (dedicated to the great

French violinist Jacques Thibaud) is also a work to reckon with, its opening 'Obsession' toying with Bach's E major Prelude (Solo Partita No 3) while ghosting the 'Dies irae' chant, which dominates the rest of the piece. Again the cut and thrust of Pietsch's playing makes a big impression, while the Bachian axis is nearly as evident in the single-movement Third Sonata, dedicated to that pre-eminent Bachian Georges Enescu. Here passion takes the upper hand and Pietsch never stints in that respect, nor in her masterful handling of chords.

Perhaps the lightest work on the programme is Prokofiev's Solo Sonata which, as Norbert Hornig tells us in his useful booklet note, was composed in 1947 as an exercise in unison-playing for violin students. Of especial note is the folky third movement, where Pietsch focuses the spirit to perfection. Audite's sound quality is extremely realistic so if the programme appeals, I wouldn't hesitate. If it's just the Bartók Sonata in digital sound you're after then Pietsch is up there with Kelemen (Hungaroton, 5/13) and Ehnes (Chandos, 1/13), maybe even marginally more outspoken than either. **Rob Cowan**

Beethoven

'Tempest – Piano Sonatas, Vol 7'

Three Piano Sonatas, Op 31.

Piano Sonata, WoO47 No 3

Martin Roscoe *pf*

Deux-Elles © DXL1167 (84' • DDD)



Martin Roscoe began his traversal of the Beethoven Piano Sonatas in 2010, billed

as the first complete recording of the Barry Cooper Edition. This volume, the seventh of a projected nine, contains the three sonatas of 1802 that, despite their disparate character, are roughly contemporaneous with the Heiligenstadt Testament, prefaced by the third of the three sonatas composed by Beethoven at the age of 12.



An expansive array of colours: Vincenzo Maltempo lavishes his refined pianism on a volume of Russian piano sonatas

And a charming overture the D major Sonata, WoO47 No 3, turns out to be in preparation for weightier matters. Using a noticeably lighter touch appropriate to the less robust pianos available in Bonn during the early 1780s, Roscoe takes great pains to exhibit the fecund imagination of the young composer. Though not yet harnessed to the harmonic thinking of the mature master, the variety and resourcefulness of the figurations are fascinating.

In the outer movements of the G major Sonata, Op 31 No 1, Roscoe doesn't let a single joke slip past, even as he delivers them with subtlety rather than with thigh-slapping guffaws. He floats a flawless *cantabile* above the sly accompaniment of immense finesse in the *Adagio grazioso* in one of the disc's many highlights.

Roscoe charts a steady course through the serious and occasionally threatening terrain of the *Tempest* Sonata, Op 31 No 2. Some of Beethoven's more enigmatic instructions are scrupulously observed, including the pedal indication sustained throughout the extended recitative of the first movement, and the muffled drum tattoos undergirding the *Adagio*. The *moto perpetuo* of the finale – lean, fraught and sparsely pedalled – is alarmingly effective.

The great E flat Sonata, Op 31 No 3, is appropriately kept on the early side of that great point-of-no-return, heralded by the *Waldstein* and *Eroica*, ushering in Beethoven's 'heroic' second period. Textures are translucent throughout and a good bit of charm, in lieu of insistence, sells the message. Despite the fact that the Scherzo is nothing short of hilarious, it can't upstage the madcap romp of the Rondo.

These are original readings of great style, wit and imagination, each individual sonata emerging with rare emotional and intellectual cohesion. I think you'll enjoy them. **Patrick Rucker**

Brahms

'Late Piano Music'

Piano Pieces – Op 76; Op 116; Op 117; Op 118; Op 119. Two Rhapsodies, Op 79

Charles Owen *pf*

Avie ® ② AV2397 (116' • DDD)



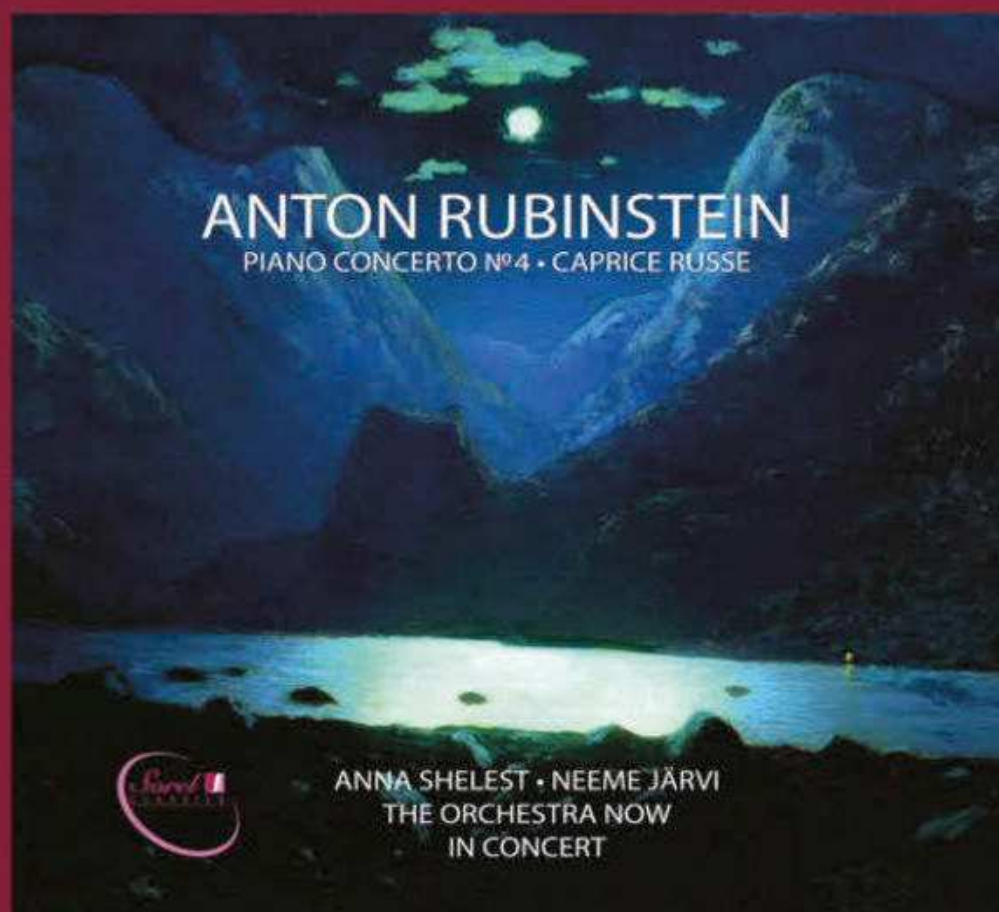
That Charles Owen has thought deeply about Brahms before committing

the late music to disc is obvious from his conversation with Christopher Cook in the booklet. And that care comes through in his music-making too. In Op 117, for instance, he finds an apt simplicity to its opening number, while the second has a nice gentleness. The third is filled with a tangible sadness, and is nicely inward – altogether more urgent than Jonathan Plowright, who produces one of the most touchingly withdrawn readings on record. In Op 116 Owen is particularly telling in the A minor Intermezzo, which has a pleasing intimacy, contrasting with the turbulence of the following number and the sonorously beautiful E major *Adagio* that forms the set's centrepiece.

The highlights of Op 118 are to be found in the second piece, which he turns into a true Lied, with a beautifully haloed middle section, and the Ballade, which sets off with a bright-eyed vigour that avoids any hint of trenchancy thanks to his light way with the left-hand chords. In the sixth piece – which, as Owen mentions in the notes, has been identified by Jonathan Keates as starting with the *Dies irae* chant – the pianist combines myriad colours with a



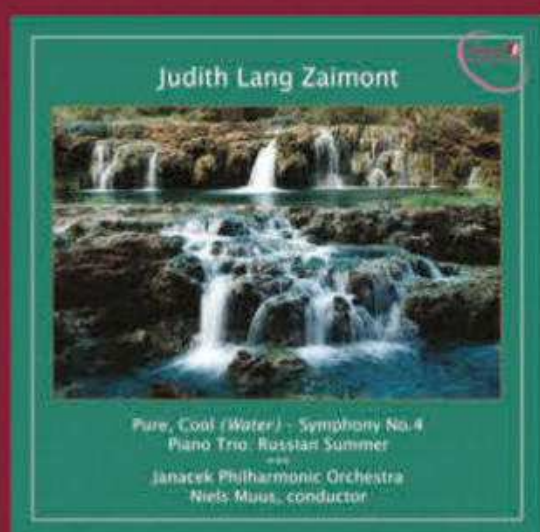
Expanding opportunities for women in music



ANTON RUBINSTEIN

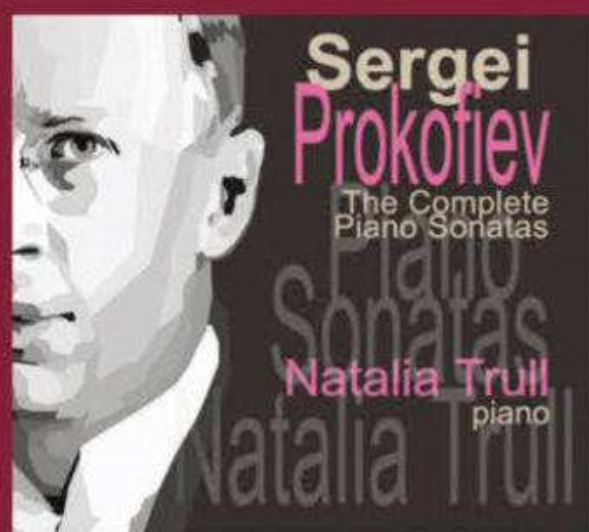
Piano Concerto No. 4 in D minor, Op. 70,
Caprice Russe Op. 102
Anna Shelest, piano
Neeme Järvi, conductor
The Orchestra Now
Recorded Live at
Jazz at Lincoln Center's Rose Theater
New York City

The first release in a series of recordings featuring Anton Rubinstein's works for piano and orchestra with Neeme Järvi and Anna Shelest.



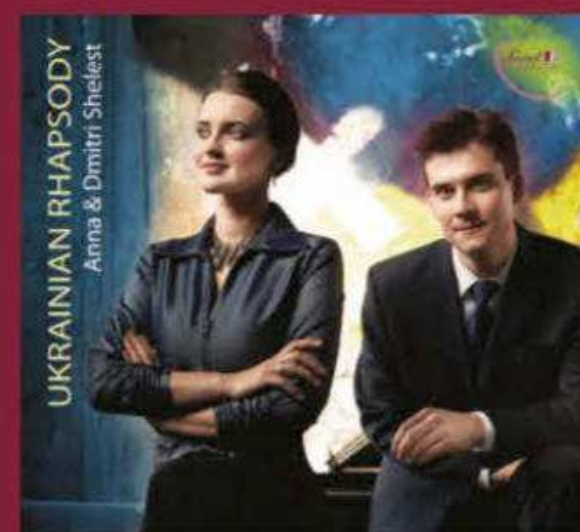
JUDITH LANG ZAIMONT

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SERGEI PROKOFIEV

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UKRAINIAN RHAPSODY

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Anna & Dmitri Shelest, piano four hands
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profound unease. But in the fourth piece, I prefer Angelich's more fluid tempo, while in No 5 it is Plowright, with his steadier speed, who conveys the piece's processional quality. And of course any new recording of late Brahms is going to come up against Arcadi Volodos, whose combination of velvet tone and an inimitable ear for voicing and singing a melodic line casts a long shadow.

I was less convinced by Op 119, in which Owen sounds a touch tentative. The opening piece is slightly too measured, while the second lacks the vivid characterisation of Lupu and Freire. The third could have been more playful and the light-to-dark final Rhapsody doesn't find the drama that Lupu and Freire so abundantly demonstrate. On the other hand, much of Op 76 works well, not least the turbulent first piece and the gently playful second, though in the third Plowright dares to dream more, to rapturous effect.

The two Op 79 Rhapsodies are another highlight of this set, though, Owen conveying the requisite sense of power, surmounting their difficulties with ease and making the much-played G minor very much his own.

Harriet Smith

Piano Pieces – selected comparisons:

Volodos (6/17) (SONY) 88875 13019-2

Freire (4/07) (DECC) 483 2154DH

Plowright (12/14, 2/16, 4/17) (BIS) BIS2117, 2127, 2137

Opp 116-119 – selected comparison:

Angelich (4/07) (VIRG/ERAT) 379302-2

Opp 79 & 117-119 – selected comparison:

Lupu (8/87, 3/06) (DECC) 417 599-2GH, 475 7070DC3

Chopin · Liszt · Schumann

'HMV Recordings 1925-1937'

Albéniz Iberia, Book 2 – No 3, Triana. Tango,

Op 165 No 2 (arr Godowsky) **Chopin**

Berceuse, Op 57. Études – Op 10; Op 25.

Fantaisie-Impromptu, Op 66. Prelude, Op 28

No 1. Waltzes – No 1, Op 18; No 6, Op 64 No 1

Delibes Naïla – Waltz (arr Dohnányi)

Liszt Hungarian Rhapsody, S244 No 2.

Liebestraum, S541 No 3. Waldesrauchen,

S145 No 2. Widmung (Schumann), S566

Mendelssohn A Midsummer Night's Dream –

Scherzo (arr Hutcheson) **Moszkowski**

Caprice espagnole, Op 37 **Mozart** Don

Giovanni – Serenade (arr Backhaus)

Schubert Marche militaire, D733 No 3

(arr Backhaus) **Schumann** Fantasie, Op 17.

Fantasiestücke, Op 12 – No 2, Aufschwung;

No 7, Traumes Wirren. Nachtstück, Op 23

No 4 **Smetana** Polka No 3

Wilhelm Backhaus *pf*

APR ® ② APR6026 (160' • ADD)

Beethoven

'The Complete Pre-War Beethoven Recordings'

JS Bach Christmas Oratorio, BWV248 –

Pastorale (arr Clarence Lucas). Preludes and

Fugues – BWV846; BWV687 **Beethoven** Piano

Concertos – No 4, Op 58^a; No 5, 'Emperor',

Op 73^b. Piano Sonatas – No 8, 'Pathétique', Op 13;

No 14, 'Moonlight', Op 27 No 2; No 26, 'Les

adieux', Op 81a; No 32, Op 111

Wilhelm Backhaus *pf*

^aLondon Symphony Orchestra; ^bRoyal

Albert Hall Orchestra / Landon Ronald

APR ® ② APR6027 (142' • ADD)

Recorded 1927-37



Wilhelm Backhaus's Chopin Études, Opp 10 and 25 from 1928, were the first to be recorded as a complete set and remain justly famous, retaining even today an unassailable position among the finest. They are part of a new APR two-disc set, alongside a miscellany of Chopin, Liszt, Schumann (including the C major *Fantasia*) and others, comprising Backhaus's recordings for HMV between 1925 and 1937. Listeners familiar only with the formidable granite surfaces of Backhaus's post-war Beethoven or Brahms will find in this collection a treasure trove of delightful surprises.

Backhaus's own transcriptions of the Serenade from *Don Giovanni* and the E flat *Marche militaire* of Schubert warrant pride of place. Virtuoso transcriptions they undoubtedly are, but with the peculiar quirk that one must listen closely to discern their difficulty. Technical display, as it were, is almost hidden, so that the original piece is front and centre, subtly embellished with its by no means obvious virtuoso trappings. Given the fame of Backhaus's Chopin Études, it's less surprising that two Waltzes, Op 18 and Op 64 No 1, should be brilliant or the Berceuse charming. Yet Albéniz's 'Triana' and Godowsky's transcription of the *Tango*, Op 165 No 1, are likely to leave your windows steamed. No, really.

Backhaus was also an extraordinarily persuasive Liszt player. The sixth *Soirée de Vienne* is savoured as one would the unpretentious pleasure of a light white Viennese wine. 'Waldesrauschen' is imbued with the seriousness of purpose of a symphonic poem. What the Second *Hungarian Rhapsody* lacks in gypsy swagger and abandon is more than compensated by the ease and polish of its sterling pianism.

His third *Liebestraum* is perhaps most remarkable in that nothing is allowed to obtrude between the listener and Freiligrath's ardent text, which occupies the foreground as though it were declaimed by a great actor, without excess or affectation. The same could be said of Rückert's 'Du meine Seele' in this unforced yet eloquent performance of Liszt's setting of Schumann's 'Widmung'.

As impressive as some of the smaller Schumann pieces are, it is the 1937 C major *Fantasia* that commands attention. Shot through with poetry and passion, and supported by one of the great techniques of the century, this *Fantasia* is grippingly beautiful, all the more astonishing when you consider that the second movement represents a single unedited take.

The other two-disc set, devoted to the pre-war Beethoven recordings, seems more consistent with the image we have of Backhaus's later years. The G major Concerto (No 4) was recorded in September 1929 and the following March. The *Emperor*, on the other hand, was captured in a single day in January 1927. Landon Ronald was the able collaborator in both. Backhaus has a particularly fascinating way with the development of the G major's opening *Allegro* but it must be said that his decision to use his own elaborate cadenza in the Rondo, in lieu of Beethoven's, threatens to swamp the movement. Jed Distler's perceptive booklet notes point out that Backhaus felt that the *Emperor* was the recording with which he would most like to represent himself to posterity. The sonatas are a bit of a mixed bag, some superior to his later recordings, others not. The Bach pieces were fillers for the extra sides of the original 78 releases.

Both of these welcome sets fill out a portrait of one of Germany's important pianists. **Patrick Rucker**

Liszt

'Complete Piano Music, Vol 51'

Albumblatt, 'Première Consolation', S171b

(fragment). Après une lecture de Dante, S158b

(second version). Ballade No 2, S170a (first

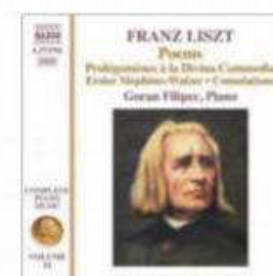
version). Consolations, S171a (first version).

Sposalizio, S157a (first version). Der Tanz in der

Dorfschenke, S514 (revised version)

Goran Filipec *pf*

Naxos ® 8 573794 (70' • DDD)



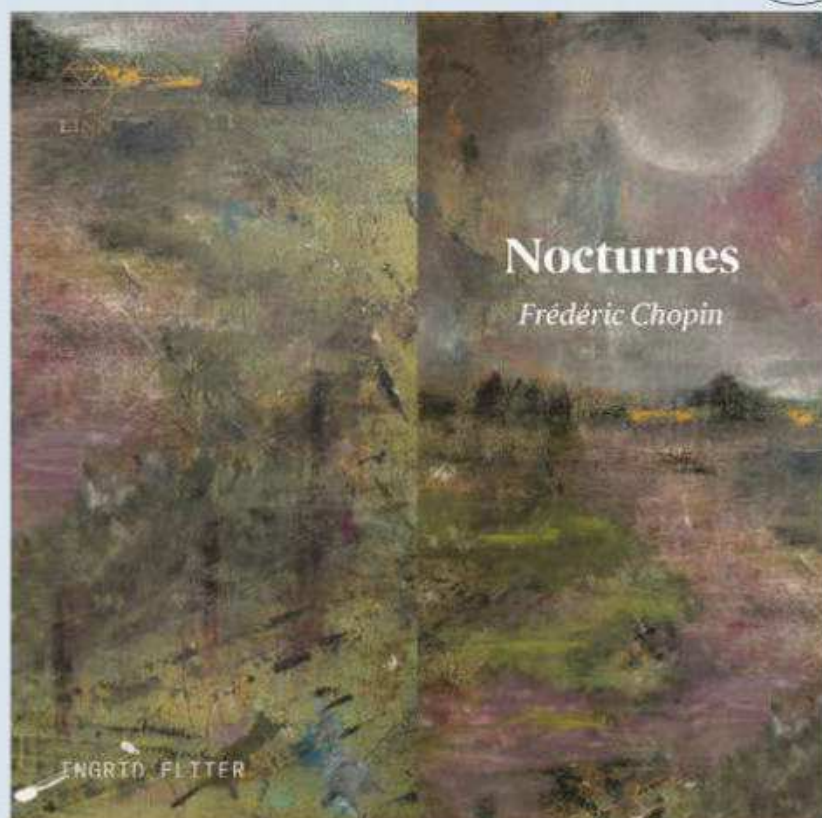
The latest instalment in Naxos's series of Liszt's piano music contains early or



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Renaud Capuçon © Caroline Dautre



King's organ scholar Richard Gowers gives a thrilling account of Messiaen's *La Nativité du Seigneur*

otherwise unfamiliar versions of a several quite well-known pieces. What exactly are the differences? Without space to deal with them in detail, a few suggestions must suffice. The second version of the *Dante Sonata*, called *Prolégomènes*, a work that Liszt is known to have played and continued to refine during his touring years, contains most of the material of the final version as it appears in the second book of *Années de pèlerinage*, with little of substance that was finally omitted. By and large, the *Prolégomènes* feels less spacious, with what seem to be truncated and occasionally abrupt transitions, as well as a few elaborations which were well deleted. The B minor Ballade is essentially the familiar text, yet with a heroic apotheosis. For all its splendour, one has to agree with the composer that the quiet ending of the final version creates the more compelling artwork. And in place of the famous third *Consolation*, we find an embryonic First *Hungarian Rhapsody*. All told, these versions offer a fascinating glimpse into Liszt's creative workshop and the evolution of his musical thought.

The performances of the Croatian pianist Goran Filipec, who has already contributed two volumes to the Naxos

Liszt series, are nothing short of superb. A seasoned and perceptive Liszt player, Filipec commands vast technical resources and a shimmering, beautifully expressive sound. His idiomatic grasp is such that, if we didn't have the final versions of these works, Filipec's take on the earlier drafts would go a long way towards compensation. With its blend of unusual yet recognisable repertory and first-class pianism, this is a release you won't want to miss. **Patrick Rucker**

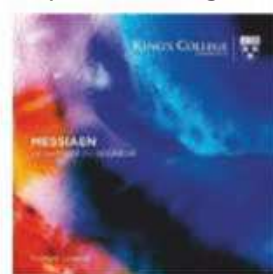
Messiaen

La Nativité du Seigneur

Richard Gowers *org*

King's College, Cambridge © KGS0025 (68' • DDD)

Played on the organ of King's College, Cambridge



Messiaen's nine-movement reflection on the birth of Christ has long earned its place as one of the great classics for organ, so it is no surprise to see King's College Chapel, Cambridge, adding its voice to the catalogue of fine recordings of the work.

This new release on King's own label is most certainly very fine indeed. Lingering

thoughts that this famous organ might be just too English to get its tongue around the Gallic accents of Messiaen are conclusively brushed aside with the tremendously focused and intensely cerebral playing of Richard Gowers. In his own essay on why he chose to record this work, he suggests that 'it has been connected with the Chapel and organ at King's for a long time', and goes on to remind us that its final part, the thrilling toccata 'Dieu parmi nous', has often been used as the postlude to the annual service of Nine Lessons and Carols.

But this sentimental connection aside – and his is a singularly thrilling performance of that movement – Gowers conveys the fundamental musicality of the work. There is a sense here that he feels the music, that he shares much of the Messiaen's vision and that he knows exactly what he wants to music to say to the listener, whether or not the organ makes the sort of sound Messiaen might originally have had in mind.

The recording quality is also very fine, as are the copious booklet notes – the absence of any material about the organ is appropriate since Gowers's performance is never intended as a showcase of organ colours – and all told I recommend this disc wholeheartedly, even in the light of some

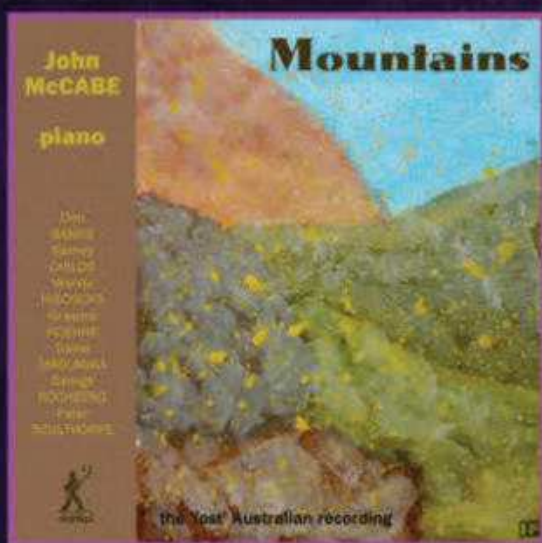
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pretty stiff competition from the likes of Olivier Latry (DG, 5/02) and one of Gowers's illustrious predecessors as a King's organ scholar, Simon Preston (Decca/Eloquence, 3/66, 3/18).

Marc Rochester

Mussorgsky • Tchaikovsky

'Tchaikovsky Plus One, Vol 1'

Mussorgsky Pictures at an Exhibition

Tchaikovsky The Seasons, Op 37b

Barry Douglas *pf*

Chandos © CHAN10991 (76' • DDD)

Tchaikovsky

Tchaikovsky The Seasons, Op 37b.

Aveu passioné. Dumka, Op 59.

Two Pieces, Op 10. Romance, Op 5

Yuan Sheng *pf*

Piano Classics © PCL10157 (74' • DDD)



'Tchaikovsky Plus One' is the first of a new series in which Barry Douglas pairs some of Tchaikovsky's principal works for solo piano with those of his compatriots. It was, of course, in Russia where Douglas made his name by winning the 1986 Tchaikovsky Competition. But even before that, as he explains, he 'felt a deep affinity with Russian culture'. And it shows.

I don't know how long he has had these works in his repertoire but they sound like old friends, well played-in. From the opening bars of the Schumannesque 'By the hearth' (January from *The Seasons*), Douglas draws you in with his self-effacing, intimate approach and beguiling tone. Anyone who has heard his 'Celtic Reflections' and 'Celtic Airs' albums (also Chandos) will know how eloquent he can be when presented with a simple, uncluttered melody line. Listen to 'Barcarolle' (June) and 'Autumn Song' (October) and you'll see what I mean. The more extrovert numbers ('Carnaval'/February, 'Troïka'/November) are no less successful.

There have been more viscerally thrilling *Pictures* than this from Horowitz and Richter down, but few with such musical and textual integrity. I listened to it with great pleasure. Nothing to scare the horses, nothing exaggerated, no tinkering with the text, each section deftly characterised and using the full tonal and dynamic range of the piano. Douglas uses the original score, so you hear minor differences from the more familiar Rimsky-Korsakov edition

such as 'Bydło' beginning *ff* (not with a distant *pp*), no repeats in 'Goldenberg and Schmuyle' and the original ending of two octave B flats. Is he quite *feroce* enough in 'Baba-Yaga'? Does he release too much tension in 'The Great Gate of Kiev'? Not enough to spoil a distinguished and beautifully recorded account of this great score.

Set beside Barry Douglas, I'm afraid Yuan Sheng's account of *The Seasons* is like comparing a pleasant spring walk in the Yorkshire Dales with a freezing midwinter trudge through the streets of Sheng's native Beijing. Despite the fulsome biography in the booklet, I fail to hear much beyond a decent technique and a limited imagination. Five unrelated Tchaikovsky solos beckoned, among them the popular *Humoresque* but here without its requisite impish twinkle. The final piece is the *Dumka*, made famous by Vladimir Horowitz in his 1942 recording. If Sheng has heard it, he must have persuaded himself that his way of playing the piece is more interesting than Horowitz's. But it isn't. Though Yuan Sheng's Bach has been widely acclaimed, Tchaikovsky, I feel, is not quite his thing.

Jeremy Nicholas

Schumann

Davidsbündlertänze, Op 6. Geistervariationen, WoO24. Humoreske, Op 20

Gabriele Carcano *pf*

Rubicon © RCD1022 (78' • DDD)



Anyone on the receiving end of a Borletti-Buitoni fellowship gets my respect, as it's generally an indicator of prodigious musical promise. Yet Gabriele Carcano's new disc of Schumann does not live up to expectations. Problems become apparent right from the start: the opening movement of Schumann's *Humoreske* is so pulled-about, the hands desynchronised as a matter of course, that you practically lose sight of where the bar lines fall. This is compounded by a focus on creating a clarity of texture which leaves the music feeling disembodied. William Youn, in his recent Sony disc, was a far more compelling interpreter. The second section begins more convincingly but this doesn't last; and, while there are passages that succeed better, such as the energetic writing in the midst of the third part, it's very hit-and-miss and ultimately Carcano's disinclination to stick to any particular tempo is frustrating. Lupu

makes everything speak so much more naturally and Carcano doesn't come close to Anderszewski in terms of personality.

In *Davidsbündlertänze*, there are occasional hints of what might have been had Carcano simply allowed the music to speak for itself. A number such as 'Zart und singend' (track 19) has poise and poetry, while tracks 17 and 21 show that he has technique aplenty. But 'Nicht schnell' (track 12) drenches Schumann's creation in cheap perfume, while 'Balladenmässig, sehr rasch' (track 15) is spoilt by an unsubtle left hand. He's a world away from artists such as Uchida, who makes this piece completely her own with a masterful imagination and the most subtle pianism, or Imogen Cooper, who brings to it a finely detailed characterisation.

Carcano ends with the late *Geistervariationen*, the theme unfolding quite steadily. Here, too, there's a tendency to get lost in the detail: the Canon is unsubtly rendered, while the fourth variation is overly concerned with inner detail and the last also lacks a sense of line. How much more Cooper makes of this.

Harriet Smith

Humoreske – selected comparisons:

Lupu (4/95) (DECC) 440 496-2DH

Anderszewski (1/11^R) (VIRG/ERAT) 642022-0

Youn (11/18) (SONY) 19075 86090-2

Davidsbündlertänze – selected comparison:

Uchida (12/10) (DECC) 478 2280DH2 or 478 2936DH

Davidsbündlertänze, Geistervariationen – selected comparison:

Cooper (10/15) (CHAN) CHAN10874

'American Landscapes'

'Anthology of American Piano Music, Vol 3'

Cadman From the Land of the Sky-Blue Water

Copland Down a Country Lane Farwell From

Mesa and Plain, Op 20 (excs). Sourwood

Mountain, Op 78 No 3 Grainger Spoon River

Harris Streets of Laredo Heinrich The Minstrel's

March, or The Road to Kentucky MacDowell

Woodland Sketches, Op 51 Mason Silver Spring,

Op 6 Ornstein A Morning in the Woods Still

A Deserted Plantation

Cecile Licad *pf*

Danacord © DACOCD800 (77' • DDD)



Like its predecessors, the third volume of Cecile Licad's 'Anthology of American Piano Music' is a model of imaginative programme-building. Aaron Copland's wistful *Down a Country Lane* raises a gentle curtain upon early 19th-century composer Anthony Philip Heinrich's energetically naive *The Minstrel's March*. This music provides

a brilliant lead-in to the more strikingly idiosyncratic keyboard layout of Percy Grainger's *Spoon River*, where Licad manages to make the passages in extreme registers sound full-bodied.

Licad's long-proven instinct for Romantic breadth and ear-catching nuance fully manifests itself throughout William Mason's scintillating *Silver Spring* and Edward MacDowell's *Woodland Sketches*. She brings just the right kind of scurrying, nervous energy to the upward unison runs of 'In Autumn' while breathing fresh, easy-going life into that old chestnut 'To a Wild Rose'. The rhythmic kick that Licad brings to Arthur Farwell's *Sourwood Mountain's* hoedown fiddle evocations couldn't be more idiomatic, and the same can be said for her straightforward interpretations of the five pieces encompassing Farwell's *From Mesa and Plain*, a suite based on Native American songs and dances. And given Licad's splendid way with Gottschalk, it's not surprising that she's totally comfortable negotiating the syncopated sound world in the outer movements of William Grant Still's *A Deserted Plantation*.

Leo Ornstein's almost Scriabinesque *A Morning in the Woods* reveals an introspective side to a composer better known for his wilder futuristic style, and again suits Licad's stylistic proclivities. But she slightly disappoints in the final two selections. The wonderful harmonic ideas in Roy Harris's *Streets of Laredo* are undermined by Licad's overly fast and casually phrased performance; I find that the music's plain and granitic demeanour are better served by the austere deliberation of Geoffrey Burleson's Naxos recording. Plus her twitchy rubato in Cadman's *From the Land of the Sky-Blue Water* often makes it difficult to ascertain the basic pulse. However, on the whole, Licad's caring and intelligent performances and the savvy programme selection by David Dubal and executive producer Thomas Nickelsen augur well for future volumes.

Jed Distler

'Bach Inspirations'

JS Bach Solo Violin Partita No 2, BWV1004 - Chaconne. Cantata No 140 - Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme. Cantata No 147 - Jesus bleibet meine Freude **Barrios** La catedral **Bogdanović** Suite brève **Gounod** Ave Maria^a **Tansman** Inventiones (Hommage à Bach). Pièce en forme de Passacaille **Villa-Lobos** Bachianas Brasileiras No 5 - Aria^a. Prelude No 3 (Homenagem a Bach) **Thibaut Garcia** gtr^a **Elsa Dreisig** sop
Erato © 9029 56052-6 (69' • DDD)



The 24-year-old Franco-Spanish classical guitarist Thibaut Garcia's third

recording – his second for Erato – revisits the music of Bach and Latin America. But where the first, 'Demain dès l'aube', included Bach's Sixth Partita, BWV830, and the second, 'Leyendas', Piazzolla's *Estaciones Porteñas*, 'Bach Inspirations', as its title suggests, focuses on Bach's influence on subsequent composers, not just from Latin America but also from Poland and the Balkans.

In his flowing, pellucid interpretations Garcia himself seems to be inspired by Bach's name, and throughout much of the programme there's a compelling tension between the rippling enunciation of lighter paragraphs and the precipitous propulsion of more dramatic passages. This is most obvious in Garcia's thrilling, magisterial performance of Bach's D minor Chaconne, where he also relishes the ringing *campanella* effects while injecting a mesmeric fluidity into the rapid scale and arpeggio passages that throw into sharper relief the cleanly etched architecture of the sunlit major section. But it is also there from the beginning, with Barrios's melancholy *La catedral*, and later, in the less often-heard *Inventiones* of Alexandre Tansman and Dušan Bogdanović's superb *Suite brève*.

An expressive, sweet-toned Elsa Dreisig joins Garcia for the Bach/Gounod *Ave Maria* and the aria from Villa-Lobos's *Bachianas Brasileiras* No 5, while the latter's Bachian Prelude No 3 looks past the Bogdanović to the most sheerly beautiful takes on Bach's 'Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme' and 'Jesus bleibet meine Freude' I've heard from any guitarist to date: clear, relaxed and full of feeling. **William Yeoman**

'The Berlin Recital'

Ligeti Études - No 1, Désordre; No 3, Touches bloquées; No 9, Vertige **Prokofiev** Piano Sonata No 8, Op 84 **Rachmaninov** Études tableaux - Op 33 No 3; Op 39 No 1. Preludes - Op 23 No 5; Op 32 No 10 **Scriabin** Piano Sonata No 10, Op 70 **Yuja Wang** pf

DG © 483 6280GH (65' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Kammeraal of the Philharmonie, Berlin, June 1, 2018



'Exceptional artistry, technical perfection and boundless imagination' it

says on the back cover. Such hype normally puts my back up. But on this occasion I'll happily endorse it.

To start, as Yuja Wang does, with one of the most well-flogged warhorses in the repertoire, in the shape of the Rachmaninov G minor Prelude, would seem to be asking for trouble, and her opening bars do flirt with sensationalism by giving so much so soon. But that would be to underestimate her exceptional resources of dynamics, tone and accent. Similarly, her rubato in the middle section is strikingly pliant; yet it never breaks the broad line, and the layering of the texture is superbly orchestral, while the reprise shows her ability to give sharp profile to her phrasing at either dynamic extreme.

In the first of her two C minor *Études-tableaux* she is as tempestuous and temperamental as the music demands: some might even say more than it demands. But she never loses her head, and her colours are original without being wilful. As the slower *Étude-tableau* demonstrates, her 'boundless imagination' is equally evident in her pedalling, and in both the B minor Prelude and Scriabin's Sonata No 10 she moves smoothly between feathery, evocative touches and maximum eruptive volatility.

The three Ligeti Études are supreme tests of pianistic colouring as well as intellectual agility, and here too Wang offers a tour de force of quasi-orchestral detail. I have not carried out a forensic-level comparison with Aimard but the general impression he gives is certainly more strenuous and less streamlined.

Prokofiev's Sonata No 8 demands a longer-range grasp of drama, and here too Wang rises to the challenge. Again her weighting of the component parts of every texture is a marvel to behold, and this in turn enables the outer movements to fly rather than merely to bludgeon, as they sometimes do. Occasionally a slight left-before-right desynchronisation helps her along, which I can imagine some finding a little mannered, especially in the *Andante sognando* slow movement, where her rubato also arguably detracts more than it adds. To rival Richter's classic, though admittedly more drily recorded and plain-speaking, 1962 account would require some reining-in of her instinct to seduce and dazzle by sonoristic means, and a transfer of that energy into more probing for philosophical depth. On the other hand, Prokofiev's innate exhibitionism is undeniably done full justice, while the finale's crucial 'irresolute' reminiscence of the first movement also rings emotionally true. The uber-exuberant last pages



Inspired by Bach: Thibaut Garcia conveys the influence of Bach on composers from Latin America, Poland and the Balkans

provoke a torrent of applause that is as fully earned as the hype accompanying the disc.

Anyone hitherto more put off than drawn in by Yuja Wang's glamorous image may have to do some rethinking in the light of this recital. Fabulous piano sound, too: to capture large-hall, high-impact playing such as this without compromise or distortion is an achievement in itself.

David Fanning

Prokofiev – selected comparison:

Richter (DG) 449 744-2GOR

'The Dreams & Fables I Fashion'

JS Bach Solo Violin Partita No 2, BWV1004 – Chaconne **Berio** Sequenza VIII **Biber** Mystery (Rosary) Sonatas – No 10, 'The Crucifixion'; No 16, Passacaglia **Pandolfi Mealli** Sonata, 'La Cesta', Op 3 No 2^b **Sciarrino** Capriccio No 2

Elicia Silverstein *vn*

^{ab}**Mauro Valli** *vc* ^a**Michele Pasotti** *theorbo*

Rubicon © RCD1031 (56' • DDD)



This debut disc from the American violinist Elicia Silverstein draws its title from

the first line of a Metastasio sonnet which describes the internal messiness of the artistic process; and while this is because for Silverstein this sentiment rings true, what's ended up on record here is anything but messy. Indeed, this is a deeply thought-through, bewitchingly rendered succession of interpretations that feels emblematic of the sorts of creative, genre-bending Baroque projects which are increasingly being presented by today's younger generation of artists.

The programme itself is a full-blown scholarly effort exploring the philosophical, structural and technical connections between the progressive violinistic composers of the 17th century and the late 20th-century Italian avant-garde composers they in turn influenced: a proposition that on paper has all the air of a thesis title but which in Silverstein's musical outworking – performed on pure gut strings – comes off as a highly emotionally intelligent piece of pure art. This is also one of those rare albums truly conceived as a whole listen from start to finish; for instance, from the *piano* ending of Biber's *Mystery Sonata* Passacaglia comes the softly shimmering opening of Sciarrino's Capriccio No 2, with the two further connected by the

magically Impressionistic, wistfully ethereal approach she's brought to both.

Scholarship has freed her to be different too because, while for Biber's *Mystery Sonata* 'The Crucifixion' she is joined by theorboist Michelle Pasotti and cellist Mauro Valli, for Pandolfi Mealli's Sonata No 2, *La Cesta*, she's been able to cite a 17th-century basis for her more unusual decision to opt for cello accompaniment alone, with the greater freedom and intimacy that allows for.

Then, while Bach's D minor Chaconne may be an eminently logical successor to Berio's *Sequenza VIII*, it's still a brave choice for a young artist's debut recording (although Emmanuel Tjeknavorian was equally brave this year when he opened his own debut album with it – Sony Classical); Silverstein's flowing, gossamer-weighted and vulnerable-toned reading, though, is both her own and entirely convincing. Whatever Silverstein does next, I'm already looking forward to it.

Charlotte Gardner

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John Pickard

Master of the string quartet and manipulator of time – this British composer makes anything seem possible, says **David Bednall**

A powerful gesture, an intriguing sonority, an arresting motif: the opening of a work by John Pickard captures and entrances the ear, mind and heart. This is music with a direct emotional and visceral impact, yet one is always aware of a keen sense of logic and control; however, it is not necessary to grasp the intricacies of the foundation to be drawn fully into the distinct landscape of each work. These qualities are characteristic of an artistic imagination in total command of both the large- and the small-scale – an architect and a decorator.

Pickard, who studied with William Mathias and Louis Andriessen, has a voice that is distinctive but not tied to any particular school or ideology. The highly dissonant and violent rubs shoulders with the serene glow of major chords, the densest of polyphonies with single-line melody (often within single movements). Two elements are key to this. First, a mastery of instrumentation, orchestration and colour, allowing the realisation in practical sound of the exotically imagined. Pickard enjoys the challenge of writing for instruments both ‘in character’ and in ways which expand their capabilities, but always at the behest of the expressive demands. A factor which no doubt contributes to this is his practical experience as a conductor – a rehearsal under his baton is notable for its efficiency and insight as well as the experience of playing a familiar score in a new but entirely convincing way. Secondly, he is never content to repeat himself or to become formulaic. As he tells me, ‘I like to surprise myself! I don’t want my development as a composer to be predictable, or to seek a style in a conscious way as this rules certain things out of your language and potentially limits its range.’ This range runs from symphonies to works for children’s choirs, from the deeply serious to the entertaining.

It displays once again a fertile ability to create an exhilaratingly varied world for an unusual combination

At the core of this output are the large orchestral works, and his symphonic technique and imagination place him at the forefront of contemporary exponents. Perhaps the best entry point to his music is *The Flight of Icarus* (1990) – a vibrant and thrilling tribute to mankind’s spirit of endeavour, even when such is doomed to failure. The ending is filled with compassion for the failure of heroism, but also honours humanity’s strength to try again. Pickard’s approach to the tone poem is rarely ‘pictorial’ – his works in this genre instead tend to represent a mood, a mindset. *Sixteen Sunrises* (2013) is a good example, the title being the number of sunrises seen from the International Space Station in a 24-hour period. He does not illustrate 16 dawns, but rather captures the idea of light and its rapid emergence from the darkness to which it can then



return. The piece also highlights Pickard’s use of exotic percussion, and his rich and imaginative orchestration is, as ever, intoxicating. The other side to this is his meditation on darkness – *Tenebrae* (2008). Taking its title from the Maundy Thursday Service at the darkest point of the Christian calendar (although it is not a religious work), *Tenebrae* explores the deep, the shadowy, the violent, the half-seen, and borrows a fragment from Gesualdo’s *Tenebrae Responsories for Holy Saturday*. Something of the notoriously dramatic life of this murderous Renaissance composer is also conveyed. Pickard has always had a fascination with the lower end of the orchestra, and two contrabassoons and two tubas (one being a contrabass) are a couple of the requirements here.

Pickard’s interest in finding inspiration in old forms is seen in the symphonies, particularly in his most recent, the Fifth (2014). This masterful work (running in a single half-hour span) is founded on the alternation of fast and slow music. To begin with, gradually shortening sections of fast music alternate with gradually lengthening ones of slow music; this alters over time until at the midpoint the balance is reversed. Pickard plays compelling aural tricks throughout, however, as the tempos change between sections, and he deliberately writes music which is slow in pulse but fast in effect. The work is also remarkable for its use of three sets of timpani – the unique nature of this demand and the particular writing



he employs requiring a rethink about how to lay out the score. Melodic lines are passed between these sets, and fierce antiphonal exchanges add strong visual drama in live performance.

Concepts of time and its manipulation feature in other works as well, such as the recent *Rain, Steam and Speed* (2017) for brass band. Here the tempo increases constantly from crotchet=40 to the highest speed on the metronome, but at a seamless rate, requiring great skill from the conductor. Incidentally, the rapturous applause that greeted this work at the premiere in Manchester earlier this year is testament to how immediate this style can be.

Pickard's compositions for brass bands represent a further important strand of his output. His writing for this medium is every bit as rewarding and imaginative as that for symphony orchestra – try *Gaia Symphony* (1991-2003) and *Eden* (2005). This is not brass band music in the traditional sense, but rather fully symphonic music written for this most remarkably skilful and flexible medium; both works are rightly recognised as two of the most important contributions to the repertoire.

His chamber music, songs and instrumental works display similar variety and imagination. The recent survey of his

PICKARD FACTS

1963 Born September 11 in Burnley, Lancashire

1981-84 Studies at Bangor University with William Mathias

1984-85 Studies at the Royal Conservatoire, The Hague, with Louis Andriessen

1989 Symphony No 2 premiered by BBC Philharmonic

1990 Composes *The Flight of Icarus*

1993 Appointed to University of Bristol Department for Continuing Education (later, in 2009, awarded Personal Chair: Professor of Composition and Applied Musicology)

1994 String Quartet No 3

1997-98 String Quartet No 4

2001-04 Cory Band composer-in-residence

2005-16 General editor of the Elgar Complete Edition

2005 *Gaia Symphony* premiered at the Cheltenham Music Festival

2008 *Tenebrae* – a 'meditation on darkness'

2014 *Sixteen Sunrises* premiered by Nagoya Philharmonic Orchestra

2016 Symphony No 5 premiered by BBC NOW

2018 *Rain, Steam and Speed* premiered in January by Cory Band

Pickard on Pickard 'I believe that symphonic thought matches the reality and complexity of our world, in which nothing is fixed and everything is in a constant state of change'

songs by baritone Roderick Williams and soprano Eve Daniell shows an ear acutely attuned to word-setting. The large-scale Piano Sonata (1987) combines immense instrumental virtuosity with strict control and a violence which still shakes the listener, while *Snowbound* (2010) for bass clarinet, cello and piano displays once again a fertile ability to create an exhilaratingly varied world for an unusual combination (the bass clarinet and cello often display their upper registers).

Pickard is rightly regarded as one of the most important contemporary masters of the string quartet (he has written five in total). He has spoken of this medium as having a particular cachet, and his proud acknowledgement of belonging to the tradition led to two self-imposed restrictions: no extended techniques, and virtually no pizzicato. This makes the 'Concerti' movement of the Fourth String Quartet (1997-98) all the more remarkable: these 'rules' are abandoned for an affectionate portrait of the members of the Sorrel Quartet, for whom it was written. Elsewhere, an intensity of thought and passionate, lyrical expression is present – the slow movement of the Third (1994) being of particular note in this respect. The magisterial String Quartet No 5 (2011-12) marked a return to the genre, and is a powerful study in conflict and resolution, honouring and revitalising this revered form.

Mention must also be made of his work as professor of composition and applied musicology at the University of Bristol. I must declare an interest here – I decided to study with him for my PhD after hearing his quartets. The highest tribute one can pay to a composition teacher is that their students sound neither like the teacher or each other, and this is very much the case with Pickard. Rather, each individual voice is strengthened, supported and stretched into new realms and given a thought process for life. Pickard is an inspirational teacher, thankfully devoid of any dogma. The same can be said of his powerful and memorable musical output. **G**

A PICK OF THE PICKARD CROP

Works that span his career from 1990 to 2014



Symphony No 5. Concertante Variations. Sixteen Sunrises. Toccata (after Monteverdi)

Wind quintet; BBC NOW / Martyn Brabbins
BIS (A/17)

The Fifth Symphony is given a virtuoso performance, not least by the three timpanists. Joining it are the luminescent *Sixteen Sunrises*, the sparkling *Concertante Variations* and an imaginative orchestration of Monteverdi's Toccata from *Orfeo*.



Eden. Symphony No 4, 'Gaia Symphony'

Eikanger-Bjørsvik Musikklag / Andreas Hanson
BIS (11/14)

These are major works for brass band which both use the forces to the full. *Gaia Symphony* also includes three short movements ('Windows') for percussion. It would be difficult to imagine greater advocates for this music than those here.



The Flight of Icarus. The Spindle of Necessity. Channel Firing

Christian Lindberg *tbn* Norrköping SO / Martyn Brabbins
BIS (6/08)

Here are three works from the 1990s: the evocative paean to heroism *The Flight of Icarus*, his trombone concerto and the gripping *Channel Firing* (dedicated to William Mathias.)

Vocal



Peter Quantrill hears a large-scale oratorio by Jörg Widmann:

'Well-drilled choral forces cut through orchestral textures as queasily luscious as a mango on the turn' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 107**



Hugo Shirley on Barbara Hannigan's tribute to fin-de-siècle Vienna:

'I found myself imagining a waif-like protagonist wandering through shadowy, dreamlike landscapes' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 113**

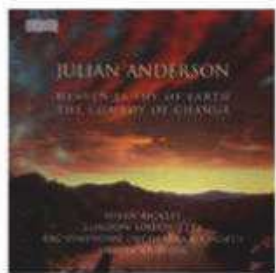
J Anderson

The Comedy of Change^a.

Heaven is Shy of Earth^b

^b**Susan Bickley** *mez* ^b**BBC Symphony Chorus and Orchestra;** ^a**London Sinfonietta /** ^{ab}**Oliver Knussen**
Ondine © ODE1313-2 (62' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at the ^aQueen Elizabeth Hall, London, March 31, 2010; ^bBarbican Hall, London, November 26, 2010



This excellent CD fills significant gaps in the Anderson discography. At the same time it

reminds us of the huge gap left by the death of Oliver Knussen. This pair of live performances radiates the clarity and conviction he brought to the most challenging contemporary scores, and the subtle balances and rich colours of the music are beautifully caught in these recordings, eight years old but sounding as fresh as the day they were made.

Heaven is Shy of Earth evolved between 2006 and 2010 as a compressed oratorio or expanded cantata combining collective rituals – the Latin Mass without the *Credo*, a Psalm – and statements of belief as found in the idiosyncratic verse of Emily Dickinson. An orchestral introduction sets the stage for what might have been called 'Epithalamium' or wedding song, built round an expansive, ecstatic melody written for the marriage of the couple to whom the whole work is dedicated. That joyous spirit permeates the remarkable equilibrium of Anderson's response to God-centred choral liturgy – as vivid here as in his *Bell Mass* (also 2010) – as well as to Dickinson's fervent hymnings (given mainly to the vibrant mezzo of Susan Bickley), in a sequence of more earthbound but arresting aphorisms: 'Nature is Heaven', 'Nature is Melody', 'Nature is Harmony', 'Heaven is Shy of Earth'.

The implications of what the poet might actually have meant by that last phrase are not easily resolved. Anderson therefore ends the work with a Dickinson-free

movement, a setting of the *Agnus Dei* whose final plea for peace on earth perhaps suggests that, whereas nature is what we know, heaven remains unknowable. As a title, *The Comedy of Change* also has its enigmatic aspects. But this seven-movement suite for 12 players, originally linked to a ballet celebrating Darwin's *Origin of Species*, revels in the mysteries and miracles of the natural world, with the exuberant yet eloquent thrust of music designed to affirm rather than to bemoan. In both *The Comedy of Change* and *Heaven is Shy of Earth* Julian Anderson's feeling for the bridges that can be built between music's timeless acoustic essentials and present-day transformational resources is unfailingly distinctive and acute.

Arnold Whittall

JS Bach

'Oboe Concertos & Cantatas'

Cantatas^a – No 52, Falsche Welt, dir traue ich nicht!; No 84, Ich bin vergnügt mit meinem Glücke. Oboe Concertos^b – BWV1055R; BWV1056R; BWV1061 (arr Willis)

^a**Anna Prohaska** *sop* ^b**Xenia Löffler** *ob/ob d'amore*
Collegium 1704 / Václav Luks
Accent © ACC24347 (68' • DDD • T/t)



Xenia Löffler's performances on a 2014 disc of assorted Venetian

concertos (10/14) from the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin (of which she is a member) were glowing demonstrations of technical mastery and musical personality, and rightly turned up on the next *Gramophone* Awards shortlist. Now here she is again with a set of Bach concertos and cantatas in which her handsome musicianship is even more at the centre of things, and even more admirable.

No actual oboe concerto by Bach survives, of course, and the ones here are speculative reconstructions from the harpsichord concertos. BWV1056

is sometimes heard on the violin but sounds made for the oboe when Löffler runs like liquid over the rippling triplets of the first solo, decks the finale's downward figure with tumbling ornaments or reels out that gorgeous *Largo* in a jewel of relaxed, airborne lyricism. BWV1061 is and always was the C major Concerto for two harpsichords, so the arrangement presented here for oboe, violin, viola da gamba and bassoon really is for fun. Does it work? Absolutely it does, bursting with colour and counterpoint like a lost *Brandenburg*. For BWV1055 Löffler switches to oboe d'amore but keeps the texture deliciously light and nimble throughout.

The cantatas both feature oboe alongside solo soprano in one way or another. No 84, exhorting us to be happy with what we have from God, allows a solo oboe to set the tone of contented submission and No 52 – a more dramatic work telling us that the world is a bad place but that God will help us – features three, not least in the first movement of *Brandenburg* No 1, reset here as an opening Sinfonia, its normally rowdy horns toned down for the occasion. Soprano Anna Prohaska is bright and feisty but somewhat colder than Löffler, and less intimate too, as the top end of her voice sometimes flies away in the church acoustic.

The orchestral playing under Václav Luks is delicately supportive, at all times attentive and neatly moulded to the soloists' moves. Löffler's wondrous playing deserves nothing less, though. I wouldn't be surprised to see her name on the Awards shortlist again. **Lindsay Kemp**

Brian

The Vision of Cleopatra^a. Two Choral Pieces^b.

Fantastic Variations on an Old Rhyme^c.

Overture, 'For Valour'^c

^a**Claudia Boyle** *sop* ^a**Angharad Lyddon** *mez*

^a**Claudia Huckle** *contr* ^a**Peter Auty** *ten* ^c**Nicholas Ansdell-Evans** *org* ^{ab}**Chorus and Orchestra of English National Opera / Martyn Brabbins**
Dutton Epoch © CDLX7348
(74' • DDD/DSD • T)



The late Oliver Knussen's excellent recording of Julian Anderson's music reaffirms that he'll be enormously missed



Havergal Brian's cantata *The Vision of Cleopatra* (1907) is the most ambitious

work of his earliest period, ie before the composition of his first opera *The Tigers* (1916-29; 4/15) and epic *Gothic Symphony* (1919-27; 2/12). The cantata is not constructed on their scale, taking just 39 minutes in this beautifully prepared performance by the Chorus and Orchestra of English National Opera under their new music director, Martyn Brabbins. (Brabbins is currently Brian's highest-profile champion; can we hope to see one of the operas soon under his baton?) It is given here in John Pickard's expert 2014 orchestration, which has allowed this fascinating, long-neglected score, setting a prize-winning poem by Gerald Cumberland, to be resurrected. Brian's full score and parts were destroyed in the Blitz in 1941; even by that time, however, *The Vision of Cleopatra*, highly regarded at the time but very challenging to perform, had languished unperformed for over 30 years.

Although *Cleopatra*'s rich harmonic language is closer stylistically to Bax or Bantock in Oriental mode, the whole is recognisably Brian. The musical argument is carried principally by the chorus and orchestra, which is not to denigrate the contribution of the four soloists, especially Claudia Huckle as Cleopatra, whose final soliloquy is exquisite. Chorus and orchestra combine again in the two 1912 settings of Robert Herrick, the wistfully intense 'Requiem for the Rose' and the more nightmarish 'The Hag'. As Pickard comments in his excellent booklet note, they make a somewhat 'lopsided' diptych (a third setting may have been written but has not survived). The purely orchestral *Fantastic Variations* (1908) and overture *For Valour* (1904-06) both featured in Marco Polo's pioneering Brian cycle. Brabbins's meticulously prepared versions are appreciably swifter and more opulently recorded, and – avoiding the occasional tentativeness in the Marco Polo accounts – must now be considered definitive.

Guy Rickards

Fantastic Variations – comparative version:

Ukraine Nat SO, Penny (6/96) (MARC) 8 223731;
(10/11) (NAXO) 8 572641

For Valour – comparative version:

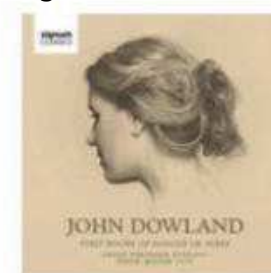
Ireland Nat SO, Rowe (6/00) (MARC) 8 223588

Dowland

First Booke of Songes or Ayres

Grace Davidson sop David Miller lute

Signum © SIGCD553 (73' • DDD)



'Semper Dowland, semper dolens', John Dowland famously punned, but the

composer's *First Booke of Songes or Ayres* couldn't be further from the fifty-shades-of-black of the *Lachrimae*. Darkness is tempered with more than a chink of light, tragedy with rueful amusement, resignation and even perhaps a certain pleasure in the courtly game of unrequited love. Soprano Grace Davidson has one of the loveliest voices in early music but whether she has the expressive range for this artful collections of miniatures is less certain.

Fresh, sweet and true, with barely a flicker of vibrato, Davidson's instrument inevitably begs comparison with Emma Kirkby. Slightly fuller of tone, her voice more evenly weighted through the range, Davidson comes off well; but with Dowland lovelier isn't always better.

The mock-sincere and 'gather ye rosebuds' songs – 'Come again, sweet love',



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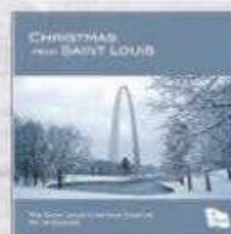


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Janina Fialkowska © Julien Faugère

'Away with these self-loving lads', 'Think'st thou then by thy feigning' – are charming, text crisply percussive against the smooth lines of melody, with David Miller's lute offering gently arch accompaniment. 'Come away, come sweet love' is all light-footed energy (though its seductions are perhaps a little on the chaste side) while Davidson's non-interventionist instincts allow the simple beauty of 'Now, oh now I needs must part' to flourish to its fullest.

But what feels lacking by the end of the recital is any glimpse of the private face of Dowland. The songs where he strips off the public affectations of grief and the sardonic mask and really shows himself to us – 'Burst forth my tears', 'Come heavy sleep', 'Dear, if you change' – lack that edge of ugliness, of desperation that seeps out between the evenly scanned lines. The latter's great invocation of nature and beyond – 'Earth, heaven, fire, air' – should plead and protest, but here just states. These are beautiful, musical performances but not moving as Dowland can and should be. **Alexandra Coghlan**

Elgar

The Music Makers, Op 69^a.

The Spirit of England^b

^aDame Sarah Connolly *mez* ^bAndrew Staples *ten*

BBC Symphony Chorus and Orchestra /

Sir Andrew Davis

Chandos © CHSA5215 (62' • DDD/DSD • T)



Both soloist and conductor have already given us notable versions of *The Music Makers* – for Naxos (12/06) and Teldec/Warner (2/95) respectively – but there's a wholly idiomatic sensibility, collaborative zeal and unity of vision that mark out this sumptuously engineered Chandos newcomer as something rather special. Certainly, Sarah Connolly's delivery of the closing lines ('Yea, in spite of a dreamer who slumbers / And a singer who sings no more') distils an aching intimacy not matched since Janet Baker's sublime contribution on Boult's recording (EMI/Warner, 5/67) – and what reserves of tender compassion she brings to 'But on one man's soul it has broken / A light that doth not depart' (track 6, from 1'12"), where the strains of 'Nimrod' pay moving reminiscence to Elgar's beloved friend and tireless champion, August Jaeger. Likewise, Andrew Davis's gloriously pliant conducting evinces total conviction. To hear him and his painstakingly prepared

BBC forces at their raptly intuitive best, listen from 1'32" on track 8 ('O men! It must ever be / That we dwell, in our dreaming and signing, / A little apart from ye') with its devastatingly poignant intertwining of themes from *Enigma*, the Violin Concerto and *The Apostles*. Make no mistake, anyone who has ever fallen under the spell of the fears, hopes and dreams that stalk this deeply vulnerable, touchingly autobiographical creation will derive copious rewards here.

Until now *The Spirit of England* (settings from 1915-17 of three poems by Laurence Binyon) has only ever been recorded in its entirety with a soprano soloist. However, Elgar also sanctioned the use of a tenor, and Andrew Staples makes an ardent showing in another terrific display under Davis's sympathetic lead. Even more than Mark Elder (Hallé, 3/17), Davis drives an arrestingly purposeful course through both outer movements ('The Fourth of August' and 'For the Fallen'), while at the same time extracting every ounce of quiet resolve and dignity from the cantata's centrepiece ('To Women'). It's an uncommonly eloquent performance in every respect, though I do retain a particularly soft spot for Alexander Gibson's distinguished 1976 version with Teresa Cahill a memorably assured soloist (originally made for RCA, 5/77, and since reissued on Chandos).

Released to coincide with the centenary of Armistice Day, this meaty choral pairing has already given me a lot of pleasure and earns the warmest plaudits.

Andrew Achenbach

Fauré

'The Secret Fauré - Orchestral Songs & Suites' *Après un rêve*, Op 7 No 1. *Caligula*, Op 52. *Clair de lune*, Op 46 No 2. *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Op 80. *Pénélope* - Prelude. *Les roses d'Ispahan*, Op 39 No 4. *Shylock*, Op 57. *Soir*, Op 83 No 2

Olga Peretyatko *sop* Benjamin Bruns *ten*

Balthasar Neumann Choir; Basel

Symphony Orchestra / Ivor Bolton

Sony Classical © 19075 81858-2 (74' • DDD • T/t)



'Rare Fauré' might be a better, if not entirely accurate title for this attractive disc, in

which Ivor Bolton conducts suites from three sets of Fauré's incidental music, along with the *Pénélope* Prelude and orchestral versions of four of his songs. *Pelléas et Mélisande*, written for the 1898 London production of Maeterlinck's play, is, of course, both familiar and widely

accepted as one of Fauré's most beautiful scores. Bolton, however, makes a case for considering *Shylock* and *Caligula* very much as its equals.

Caligula was written for an 1888 production of Alexandre Dumas's play, and refashioned as a concert work for female chorus and orchestra a year later. Much of the music derives from a set of divertissements in the final scene, during which Caligula is lulled to sleep before his assassination, though Fauré also includes ceremonial marches and fanfares from the Prologue. Intended, one imagines, to offset the play's violence, the score exudes cool, Classical refinement. The choral writing is reminiscent of the Requiem, while the sensuous orchestration strikingly pre-empted Debussy, his *Pelléas* in particular.

Shylock, written for an 1889 adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice*, is less of a rarity, though it remains infrequently heard. Fauré avoids direct representation of Shylock himself, focusing instead on the play's lovers. A deeply touching 'Épithalame' for Portia and Bassanio, and the exquisite Nocturne for Lorenzo and Jessica are its high points. The actor originally playing the Prince of Aragon was clearly a tenor of some distinction: Fauré provides him with a wistfully amorous Madrigal to be sung under Portia's window.

Both performances are strong. With the Basel Symphony on fine form, Bolton teases out Fauré's textural and emotional subtleties with great care, scrupulously judging both the delicate wit of *Shylock* and the altogether loftier mood of *Caligula*. The Balthasar Neumann Choir sound good in the latter: the tenor in *Shylock* is Benjamin Bruns, warm-toned and very ardent.

Pelléas, however, is fractionally too relaxed, lacking the deeper tensions of Robin Ticciati's recent DSO Berlin recording (Linn, A/17), though Bolton inserts *Mélisande's* Song, in Koechlin's orchestration, between the sicilienne and Death Scene, where its effect is undeniably chilling. It's sung, somewhat cautiously, in English by Olga Peretyatko, who also tackles the mélodies. Fauré apparently professed himself indifferent to orchestral songs but nevertheless arranged 'Les roses d'Ispahan' and 'Clair de lune' himself: 'Après un rêve' comes in Henri Büsser's version, while 'Soir' was orchestrated by Fauré's pupil Louis Aubert. Peretyatko sings them with quiet sincerity but is placed very close to the microphones, which capture an occasional pulse in her voice. **Tim Ashley**

Févin

Missa Ave Maria. Missa Salve sancta parens. Ascendens Christus in altum. Salve sancta parens. Sancta Trinitas a 4. Sancta Trinitas a 6
The Brabant Ensemble / Stephen Rice
 Hyperion © CDA68265 (79' • DDD • T/t)



Antoine de Févin (c1470–1511/12) is not currently well known, despite his works

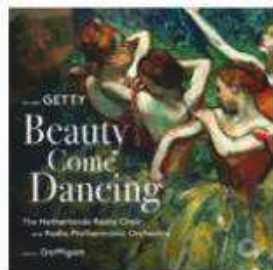
having travelled widely in his own day and now being preserved for us in several important sources alongside the work of more famous contemporaries. As this recording shows, Févin wrote some really great music and Stephen Rice introduces him as a key pioneer 'in the technique of "parody" or "imitation" Mass settings based on polyphonic models'. Indeed, the first work on this disc, *Missa Ave Maria*, is just such a Mass: one based on Josquin's famous motet *Ave Maria ... virgo serena* (available in digital download). Févin's setting resounds with familiar material from the much-loved model, working and reworking it into a four-voice Mass with several lovely extended duets. The Brabant Ensemble sing with an unfussy elegance, keeping textures clear and unhurried; I particularly like the simplicity with which they approach the most emotional moments such as the *Credo*'s 'Crucifixus etiam pro nobis' and 'Et resurrexit tertia die'.

Missa Salve sancta parens is based on plainchant embellished through a 'paraphrase' technique. The textures are more solid and sonorous and the singers rise to this setting with a fuller sound; again, there is some delightful singing in the extended two-part passages. It's a beautiful Mass with gracious proportions but between the *Kyrie* and *Gloria* there is a distracting shift in recorded acoustic. Resonance is thankfully restored by 'Osanna I' (track 37), just in time for the *Agnus Dei*, which has some of the most exquisite music.

The real jewel on this disc is the motet *Ascendens Christus in altum*. Fuller and richer than one might expect from Févin, a recent discovery has firmed up his attribution. This motet in particular suits The Brabant Ensemble extremely well, showcasing their wonderfully bright sopranos in a ravishing trio, 'Elevatis manibus ferebatur in caelum' ('Lifting his hands, he was carried up to heaven'). These larger motets with cascading upper voices are what this ensemble does best, and this particular one is especially gorgeous. **Edward Breen**

Getty

Ballet russe. Beauty Come Dancing. La Belle Dame sans merci. Cynara. The Destruction of Sennacherib. For a Dead Lady. The Old Man in the Morning. The Old Man in the Night. Shenandoah. There was a naughty boy. Those who love the most
The Netherlands Radio Choir and Philharmonic Orchestra / James Gaffigan
 Pentatone © PTC5186 621 (58' • DDD/DSD • T)



Opera and song are at the heart of Gordon Getty's work and spring as much from

his love for poetry – some of the works here feature his own – as from his distinctive melodic-minimalist music. That music is appealingly direct, shuns needless harmony and melisma, and makes distinctive use of the plain intervals, common chords, whole-tone scales and foundation stones of hymnody and musical theatre that have underpinned so much American music for more than a century.

As instantly appealing as his aesthetic is, it is also restricted. I found the experience of reading Getty's poem 'Beauty Come Dancing' more moving than that of hearing his setting of it. Across the 11 songs here – all for the unusual combination of large chorus (often singing in unison) with orchestra – I was struck by a consistent feeling that Getty's music springs from a single impulse born of each poem rather than the shifting beauty, complexity or inner music of their texts. Many of his settings gambol through the words in reciting rhythms (for all the clarity, it's mostly impossible to decipher the words being sung on this recording) rather than illuminating their own beauty and differentiation. The net result, to my ears, is a loss to both and a certain feeling that something is missing from the middle.

The best work is the longest, 'The Old Man in the Night' (another text by Getty himself), in which the journey is often patient, nuanced and interesting. Getty has plenty of time-honed tools and good ideas at his disposal, especially when he uses and gently subverts a dance form, as in 'Ballet russe' (setting his beloved John Masefield) and in 'Beauty Come Dancing'. When nostalgia gets the better of him, as in 'Those who love the most' (to a poem by Sara Teasdale), there isn't enough in the score to stop it sinking into something sappy. And I wonder if the music would have been better served by a vocal

ensemble more nimble than the 70-strong Netherlands Radio Choir, whose blend, brightness and focus aren't all they could have been. **Andrew Mellor**

Graupner

'Duo Cantatas for Soprano & Alto'
 Demüthiget euch nun, GWV1144/12. Waffne dich, mein Geist, zu kämpfen, GWV1148/20. Weg, verdammtes Sündenleben, GWV1147/20. Wenn wir in höchsten Nöthen seyn, GWV1143/12. Canon, GWV218. Ouverture, 'Le desiré', GWV45. Sonata, GWV724. Trio Sonata, GWV204 – Affettuoso

Miriam Feuersinger sop **Franz Vitzthum** countertenor **Capricornus Consort Basel / Peter Barczy**

Christophorus © CHR77427 (65' • DDD • T/t)



Poor Christoph Graupner. The general consensus about the composer

(a pupil of Kuhnau's and a contemporary of Telemann and Handel) is that his greatest contribution to musical history was his absence: it was his refusal of the role of Cantor at Leipzig that cleared the way for one JS Bach to take the position.

But the composer really is more than a novelty footnote in musical history, as a steadily growing (and now really quite substantial) discography has proved. This latest addition is another attractive reminder of a composer whose distinctive voice combines the languorous harmonic beauty of Kuhnau with a restraint and sense of melodic line that's much closer to Bach.

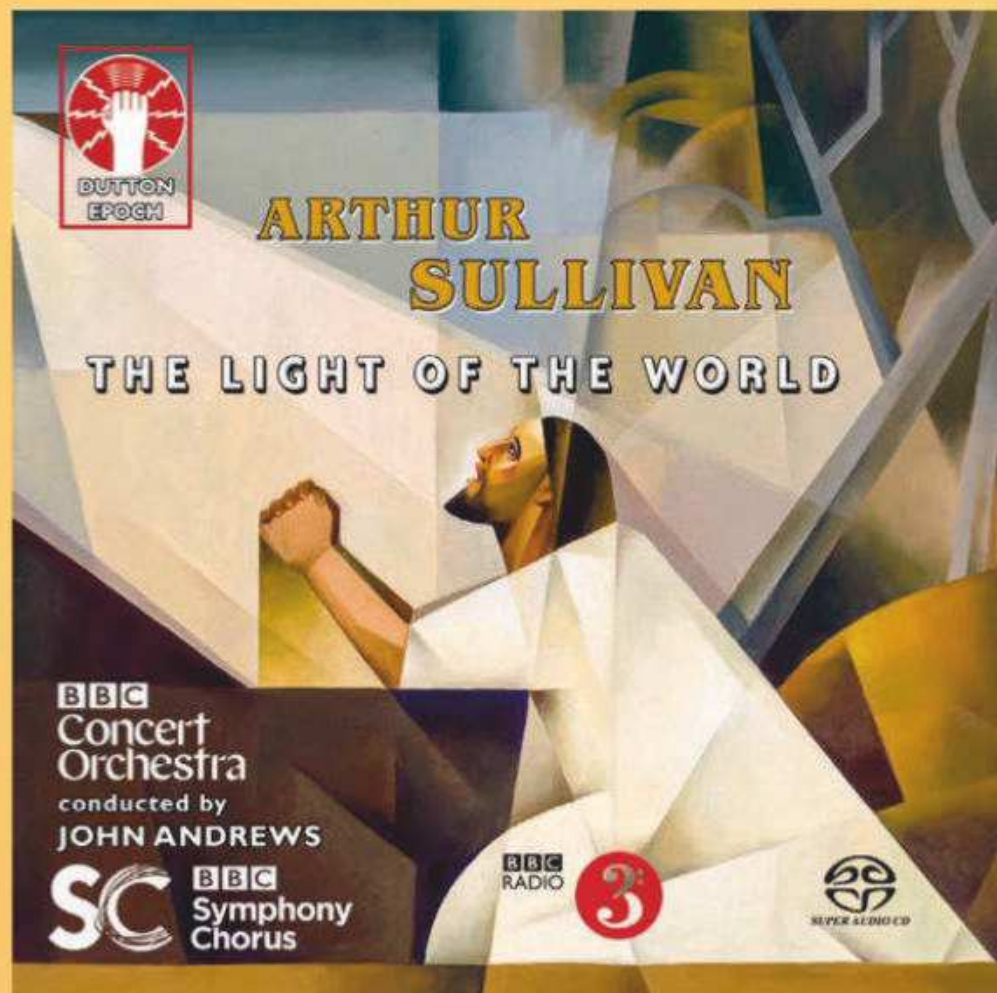
Soprano Miriam Feuersinger and countertenor Franz Vitzthum here join Peter Barczy and the Capricornus Consort Basel for a selection of the composer's duet cantatas. Sacred texts keep Graupner's naturally operatic instincts in check but he still sneaks in plenty of human drama, delighting in the metaphorical friction of male-female duets.

If the cantata *Waffne dich, mein Geist, zu kämpfen* is gracefully pretty – rarely rippling the musical surface – then the opening *Demüthiget euch nun* finds an altogether richer vein of musical emotion. The aria 'Bücke dich' for soprano and Eva Borhi's balletic solo violin is a rapt meditation, while the duet 'Ich bin gedrückt' from *Wenn wir in höchsten Nöthen seyn* paints despair in the most sensual of colours.

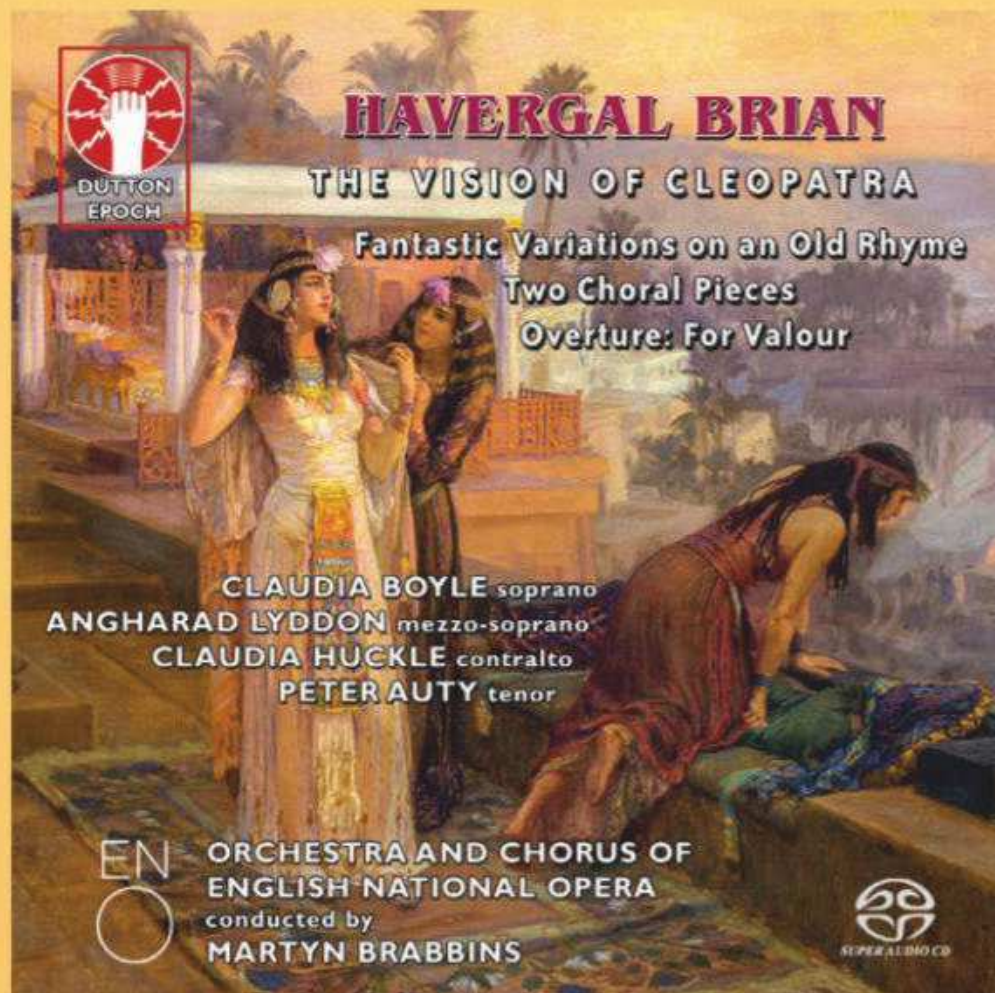
The stern, Lutheran beauty of Feuersinger's soprano is nicely offset by the breathier humanity of Vitzthum but they are, if anything, outdone by the



DUTTON EPOCH NEW RELEASE



2CDLX 7356



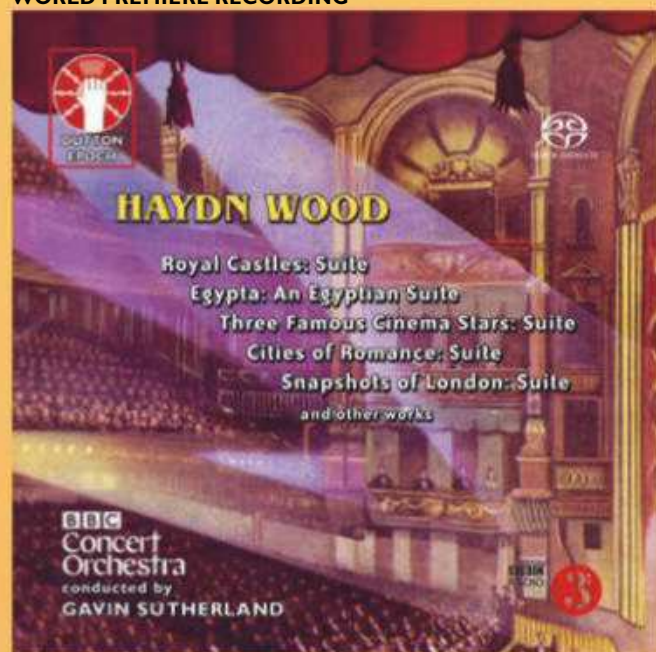
CDLX 7348

ARTHUR SULLIVAN *The Light of the World* Commissioned for and first produced at the Birmingham Musical Festival of 1873, *The Light of the World* is Arthur Sullivan's great oratorio on the life of Christ. Although regularly performed during the composer's lifetime, changing fashions gradually condemned the work to obscurity. Occasional revivals have failed to make the case for it, primarily because it was not understood that *The Light of the World* is essentially a dramatic work, rather than a purely religious one. When Dutton Epoch and the Sir Arthur Sullivan Society came to record the work, this new understanding enabled a completely different approach to be taken – the result is a vibrant performance by the BBC Symphony Chorus and the BBC Concert Orchestra conducted by John Andrews. They are supported by the Kinder Children's Choir and a fine team of soloists: Natalya Romaniw and Eleanor Dennis (sopranos), Kitty Whately (contralto), Robert Murray (tenor), Ben McAteer (baritone) and Neal Davies (bass).

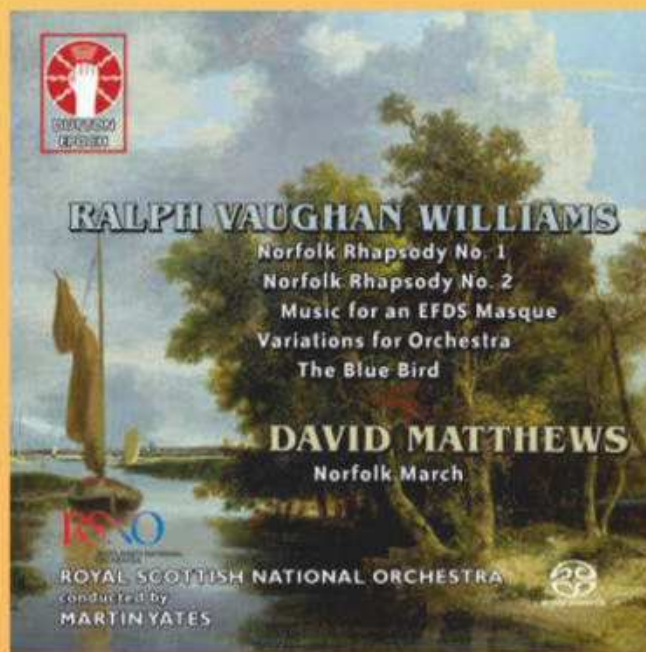
BBC CONCERT ORCHESTRA | BBC SYMPHONY CHORUS | JOHN ANDREWS
WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

HAVERGAL BRIAN *The Vision of Cleopatra* Dutton Epoch's first recording with the orchestra and chorus of English National Opera surveys the music of Havergal Brian. The dramatic and operatic setting of *The Vision of Cleopatra* (1907), the scores and parts of which were lost in wartime bombing, has been orchestrated from the vocal score by composer John Pickard. This epic cantata is vividly brought to life by a line-up of brilliant young soloists – Claudia Boyle (soprano), Angharad Lyddon (mezzo-soprano), Claudia Huckle (contralto) and Peter Auty (tenor) – while the ENO Orchestra and Chorus are in top form under the authoritative direction of conductor Martyn Brabbins. Brian's *Two Choral Pieces* (1912), the tuneful concert overture *For Valour* (1904 rev. 1906) and the delightful *Fantastic Variations on an Old Rhyme* (1907) complete a compelling release.

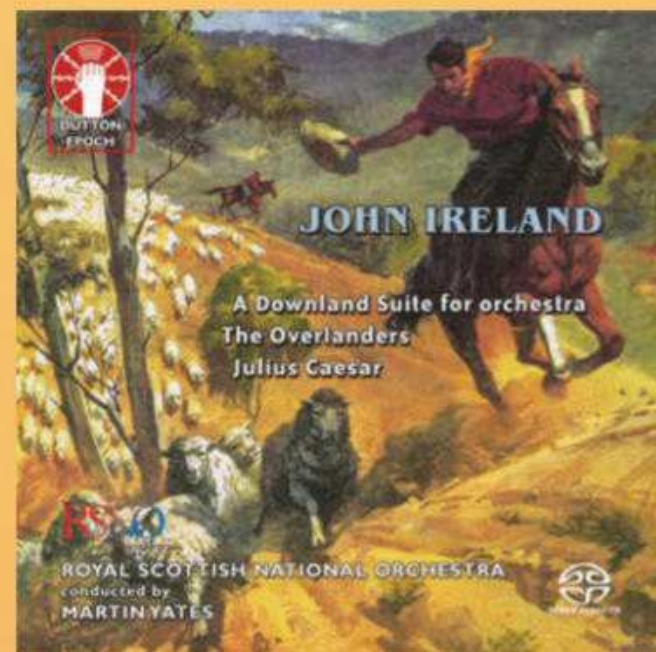
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ravishing beauty of the instrumental contributions. The opening overture *Le desire* is proto-Romantic chamber music, while the *Grave*, GWV218, pairs Borhi with Barczy himself in a delicious mesh of solo violin lines over continuo. Shivers-down-the-spine lovely.

Alexandra Coghlan

Handel

Ode for St Cecilia's Day, HWV76.

Concerto grosso, Op 6 No 4 HWV322

Carolyn Sampson *sop* Ian Bostridge *ten* Polish Radio Choir; Dunedin Consort / John Butt *hpd*
Linn © CKD578 (61' • DDD • T)



You certainly got your money's worth, both in quantity and quality, when Handel

was around. On St Cecilia's Day, November 22, 1739, Lincoln's Inn Fields audiences were treated to a revival of *Alexander's Feast*, assorted concertos, plus a newly composed setting of Dryden's *Song for St Cecilia's Day* – a good three hours' entertainment. For charm and colour few Handel works match the new Ode, as it became known. In a succession of picturesquely scored arias and choruses it hymns the powers of music from the creation of cosmic order to a thrilling evocation of the Last Judgement and the life eternal.

Outstanding among a clutch of enjoyable recordings are those from Trevor Pinnock and Robert King. This new Anglo-Polish collaboration directed by John Butt is on their level, vocally and instrumentally. In the 15 years since she recorded the Ode with King, Carolyn Sampson's vernal soprano has acquired richer shadings. If her consonants can be over-softened, her poised, invariably graceful contributions are among the disc's prime pleasures: from her radiant sense of wonder in the sarabande aria 'What passion cannot music raise and quell!', in dialogue with Jonathan Manson's musingly eloquent cello; through the wistful 'The soft complaining flute', where Sampson veils her naturally bright tone (a word, too, for Katy Bircher's poetic flute-playing); to the scintillating coloratura of her final hornpipe aria, faster and snappier than in 2003.

Poise and grace are hardly the issue in the extrovert tenor numbers, fashioned for that Handelian stalwart John Beard. Ian Bostridge, in fine, robust voice, never lets you forget that something urgent is at stake, whether in the mounting bellicose excitement of 'The trumpet's loud

clangour' or the jealous frenzy of 'Sharp violins', egged on by splenetically spitting strings. The 28-strong Anglo-Polish chorus do not always make as much of Dryden's delightful text as the choirs in Pinnock's and King's recordings but they sing with full, fresh tone and incisive attack. Under Butt's lively and sympathetic direction (which includes properly shaped bass lines), both framing choruses generate an apt Handelian majesty, though I wish he had encouraged a hushed, awed choral tone at Dryden's vision of the 'last and dreadful hour'.

Choice between Butt's recording and its two immediate rivals will boil down to individual taste. My own narrow preference is still for Pinnock, not least for the mingled warmth and grandeur Felicity Lott brings to the soprano solos. But no Handel lover is likely to be disappointed with a disc whose attractions are enhanced by a vivid performance of the A minor Concerto grosso (its opening movement truly *affettuoso*) and Butt's own superb, wide-ranging booklet essay.

Richard Wigmore

Selected comparisons:

Pinnock (1/87^R) (ARCH) 474 549-2ABL

King (A/04) (HYPER) CDA67463

Josquin

'Miserere mei Deus - Funeral

Motets & Deplorations'

Gombert Musae Jovis Josquin Absalon, fili mi. Absolve quaesumus, Domine. Déploration sur la mort d'Ockeghem. De profundis/Requiem aeternam. In principio erat Verbum. Miserere mei, Deus. Nymphes, nappés/Circumdederunt me. Pater noster/Ave Maria. Planxit autem David

Cappella Amsterdam / Daniel Reuss

Harmonia Mundi © HMM90 2620 (66' • DDD • T/t)



Like most of his contemporaries, Josquin's motet production has been overshadowed by his Masses; in fact the last all-motet anthology I can recall is La Chapelle Royale's about 35 years ago. Perhaps the most impressive thing about this new offering is the programming. Alongside a string of single-movement laments (including the one by Gombert for Josquin himself) sit the monumental *Planxit autem David* and the *Miserere*, a complete setting of Psalm 51. This brings the range of Josquin's invention into focus: the directness of *Planxit autem David*, the sheer ambition and formal control of the *Miserere*, the intricacy of *Absolve quaesumus*, *Domine* and *Nymphes nappés*, and the utter

perfection of his musical testament, the *Pater noster/Ave Maria*. I've sometimes found Josquin easier to admire than to love; but perhaps because contrapuntal wizardry is toned down in these works, this disc reminds me how deeply moving his music can be.

Cappella Amsterdam are a mixed choir singing roughly two to a part. Their sound is situated midway between their Flemish and English counterparts, and their performance style is on the cool side, though never forbidding or overly objectified. They are at their best when textures are clear and the musical discourse is most legible, as in *Planxit autem David*. In busier textures I might wish for more positive shaping of individual phrases, although in *Nymphes nappés* (perhaps the densest piece of all) the decision to go one-to-a-part and without sopranos pays dividends, and Gombert's motet is a fitting epilogue. Whether Josquin wrote *Absalon, fili mi* is still disputed but the programme plainly justifies its inclusion. Despite its focus on only one textual area (the lament), this seems to me an admirable introduction to the motet repertory as a whole.

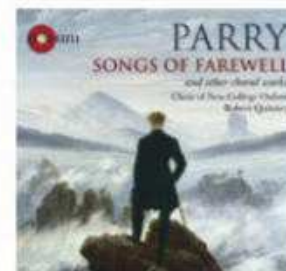
Fabrice Fitch

Parry • Mendelssohn

Mendelssohn Six Motets, Op 79 Parry Hear my words, ye people. Songs of Farewell. There is an old belief. Toccata and Fugue, 'The Wanderer' Choir of New College, Oxford / Robert Quinney

with Timothy Wakerell *org*

Novum © NCR1394 (79' • DDD • T/t)



Another stellar release to mark 100 years since the death of Hubert

Parry – and cannily programmed, too, with the towering *Songs of Farewell* (1913-15) preceded by Mendelssohn's *Sechs Sprüche* (1849) to demonstrate Robert Quinney's assertion (to Jeremy Dibble on page 26 of the June 2018 issue) that 'Parry is a great figure in the European tradition, a composer who synthesised the neo-Bachian counterpoint of Mendelssohn and Brahms with a unique flair for the English language'. Both of these ravishing *a cappella* offerings are performed with laudable precision and unfailing perception by the Choir of New College, Oxford. The performance of the former hits radiant heights in 'At the round earth's imagined corners' and 'Lord, let me know mine end' to crown a piercingly expressive, deeply humane



Exquisite musicality: Tim Mead and Les Musiciens de Saint-Julien make play with Purcell's songs and dances with delightful results

display that safely merits a place alongside a healthy number of distinguished rivals, among them Richard Marlow and the Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge (Conifer, 9/87), Ralph Allwood and the Rodolfus Choir (Herald, 10/98), Jeremy Backhouse and the Vasari Singers (Guild), and Nigel Short and Tenebrae (Signum, 12/11).

Quinney and his exemplary singers also let us hear the original version of 'There is an old belief' (first given in January 1907), and proceedings are launched with the substantial 1894 anthem *Hear my words, ye people*. The latter owes a debt to both Samuel Wesley and Bach's church cantatas, and its concluding chorale on 'O praise ye the Lord' (which subsequently became one of the most familiar of hymn tunes) makes for a stirring culmination. Rounding off this uncommonly stimulating anthology, organist Timothy Wakerell displays impressive physical stamina and intellectual acumen in the nourishing, at times almost Regerian Toccata and Fugue that Parry wrote in November 1912.

Beautifully engineered by Adrian Hunter and admirably presented, this Novum issue will surely delight all Parry fans.

Andrew Achenbach

Purcell

'Songs & Dances'

Amphitryon, Z572 - Minuet; Hornpipe; Boree; Scotch Tune. Come ye sons of art, Z323 - Strike the viol, touch the lute^a. The Fairy Queen, Z629 - Chaconne; One charming night^a. Fantazia upon a Ground, Z731. If ever I more riches did desire, Z544 - Here let my life with as much silence slide^a. The Indian Queen, Z630 - We the spirits of the air. King Arthur, Z628^a - Fairest isle; What power art thou. Love's goddess sure was blind, Z331 - May her blest example chase. The Married Beau, Z603 - March. Ode for St Cecilia's Day, Z339^a - Here the deities approve; 'Tis nature's voice. The Old Bachelor, Z607 - Hornpipe. O Solitude, my sweetest choice, Z406^a. Pavan, Z752. Timon of Athens, Z632 - Curtain Tune. 'Twas within a furlong of Edinboro town, Z605/2^a. The Virtuous Wife, Z611 - Aire

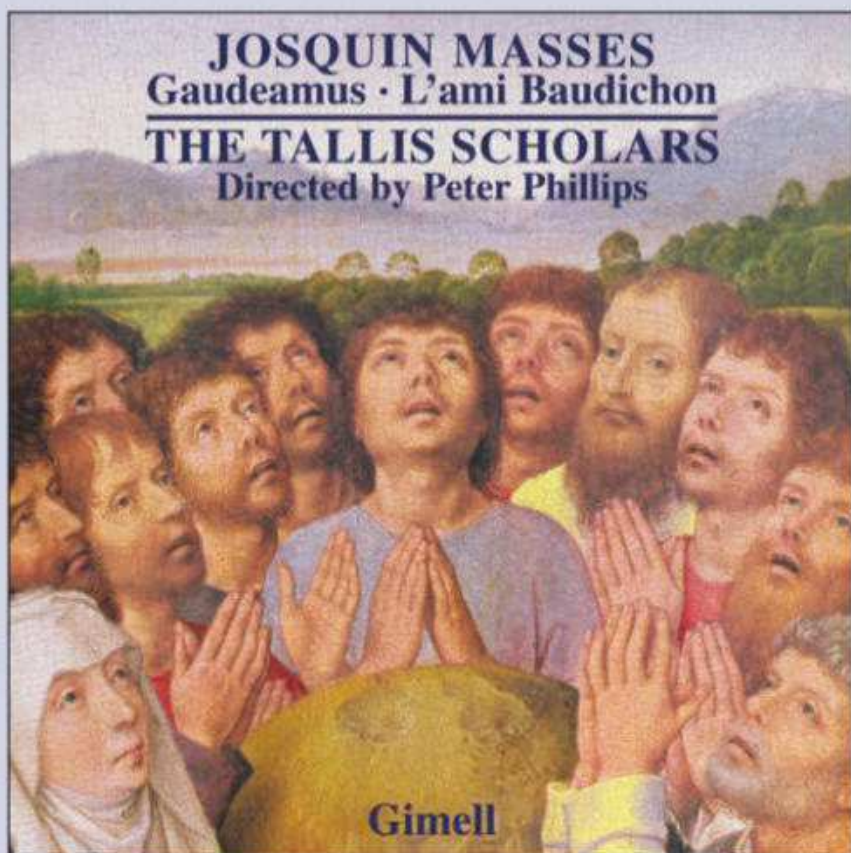
^aTim Mead *countertenor* Les Musiciens de Saint-Julien / François Lazarevitch
Alpha © ALPHA419 (66' • DDD • T)



there really is no need to worry about a 'right' way to perform them, provided that

singers are prepared to love the line and words, and players are willing to make a dance dance. Happily, both conditions are met by the performers on this disc, and, having got that settled, they allow themselves to make play with the music in a free-selecting programme driven purely by musical concerns. This is Purcell without much in the way of 'historical' context, so that the only thing the listener needs to worry about is to sit back and let this composer's life-enhancing genius wash over them. And with music ranging from the high art of 'O Solitude, my sweetest choice' and 'Tis nature's voice' to the heart-stopping simple beauty of 'Fairest Isle' and foot-tapping dance tunes plucked from the Restoration stage, genius there is in plenty.

The vocal numbers are sung by Tim Mead, a top-class English countertenor of the kind that could have been made for this music, notwithstanding that not everything here was written for his voice-type. His singing radiates rich colour, smooth lyricism and exquisite musicality, and alone would be enough to make this disc treasurable. Yet the most striking aspect of these performances undoubtedly lies in the instrumental music as served up by Les Musiciens de Saint-Julien, which is



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1: Andrew McGregor, *Record Review*, BBC Radio 3; 2: Kate Bolton-Porciatti, *BBC Music Magazine*; 3: Fiona Maddocks, *The Observer*; 4: Stephen Pettitt, *The Sunday Times*; 5: Graham Rickson, *theartsdesk.com*; 6: John Quinn, *Musicweb*; 7: Edward Breen, *Gramophone Magazine*; 8: Adrian Horwood, *Early Music Today*

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full of life and colour. Given that director François Lazarevitch is a recorder player, it is perhaps fair to expect that instrument to feature more than it might elsewhere (for instance in the *Fantazia upon a Ground*), and neither is it surprising that the ornamentation often lends the music a French accent; but the sheer rhythmic flair and Celtic-flavoured folksiness with which they deliver so many of the dances is also enhanced in places by the rasp of a musette or jangle of a cittern. The recording is clear and full-bodied, though with an irritatingly abrupt fade-up at the very start. But never mind, this disc is a hugely enjoyable Purcellian celebration.

Lindsay Kemp

Widmann

Arche

Marlis Petersen *sop* **Gabriel Böer** *treb*

Thomas E Bauer *bar* **Iveta Apkalna** *org* **Jonna**

Plathe, Baris Özden *children narrs* **Chorus of**

Hamburg State Opera; Audi Youth Chorus

Academy; Hamburg Alsterspatzen; Hamburg

Philharmonic State Orchestra / Kent Nagano

ECM New Series © ② 481 7007 (101' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Elbphilharmonie, Hamburg, January 13, 2017



With *Arche*, Jörg Widmann has (at the age of 45) delivered the kind of history-of-

everything evening-length oratorio that, in retrospect, seems an inevitable point of arrival for his music, requiring for its fulfilment only the particular no-strings-attached ('but make it big') commission attendant upon the consecration of a new concert hall: in this case, the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg. Mahler and Tippett would blush for shame.

In the beginning, pitchless rustles and whispers yield at length to clusters, biblical pronouncements and then more abruptly to a bloated send-up of Heine's exemplary anti-Romantic credo *Das Fräulein stand am Meere* – if, that is, irony is any statement of belief. Fittingly for a student of Wolfgang Rihm, Widmann gives God the rough side of his tongue. Honed over the years, his application of parody technique is so comprehensively inventive, down to the final 'Dona nobis pacem' done up as a Lutheran Christmas hymn, that the entire history of German music from Bach to, well, Widmann is experienced as if in a seaside chamber of distorting mirrors.

Rather as fish became frogs, or gods became men, the meaning of *arche* suffered a fascinating etymological shift in early-

Classical Athens from 'source' to 'rule'. Creation and Flood myths done and dusted, the postdiluvian half of *Arche* contends in complementary fashion that all you need is (you've guessed it) love. And peace. Cue more hall-of-mirrors Schumann and Schubert. Murder and apocalypse meanwhile have their say, like Alcibiades at the Symposium.

German critics were divided at the premiere. 'More pomp than soul'; 'new music that is so old an audience immediately appreciates it'. A film would at least let us in on all the theatrics that gave the audience the giggles. The audio-only record lacks nothing for flair, energy and commitment to Widmann's world of convinced irony. Well-drilled choral forces cut through orchestral textures as queasily luscious as a mango on the turn, testament not least to the new hall's exacting acoustic and ECM's spacious engineering. Playing Noah and an incensed Lied-baritone, Thomas E Bauer never forsakes the centre of an eloquent baritone that lends distinction to a new *Christmas Oratorio* on Naxos. Marlis Petersen would do a marvellous Gepopo on the strength of her abandoned melisma, cooing and coloratura. Is *Arche* a new *Mask of Time*? Or a *Petite Macabre*? Time will tell. **Peter Quantrill**

Zender

Schuberts Winterreise

Julian Prégardien *ten*

Deutsche Radio Philharmonie / Robert Reimer

Alpha © ALPHA425 (84' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at the Grosser Sendesaal, Funkhaus Halberg, Saarbrücken, Germany, January 22, 2016



Released to mark the 25th anniversary of the premiere, this new recording of Hans Zender's 'composed interpretation' of *Winterreise* marks Julian Prégardien's debut on the Alpha label, for which he signed earlier this year. It derives from a live performance by the Deutsche Radio Philharmonie, of which Zender himself was chief conductor from 1972 to 1984. Prégardien is also following in the footsteps of his father Christoph, whose own recording of the work, with Klangforum Wien under Sylvain Cambreling, was issued in 2000. The score itself, meanwhile, has long divided opinion, and like others who have written about it in these pages I confess both to admiring it and questioning its necessity.

In a booklet note, Zender describes *Winterreise* as a 'secular Passion' that 'articulates loneliness for the first time in modernity', and his interpretation surveys Schubert's song-cycle in terms of the 19th- and 20th-century Expressionism, of which it is the perceived starting point. Schubert is consequently refracted through Mahler and the Second Viennese School, whose *Klangfarbenmelodien* colour Zender's constantly shifting textures, while the presence of accordion, guitar and saxophone suggest the influence of Weimar Republic cabaret.

As the cycle progresses, the songs are increasingly pulled in and out of focus by means of augmentation and diminution, or by harmonic and rhythmic reconfigurations, as the vocal line slips in and out of *Sprechgesang*. Some of it is disarmingly literal, and we really seem to hear the wind, the cracking ice and the percussive creak of roofs under the weight of snow. Some of Zender's interventions, however, can seem too knowing. Mahlerian brass and woodwind, echoing through space, turn existential loneliness into cosmic isolation. The accompaniment to 'Das Wirtshaus' becomes a formal funeral hymn played by a wind band. Whether any of it adds anything to our understanding of Schubert remains very much a matter for debate.

You can't fault the performance, though. Conductor Robert Reimer pitches the work somewhere between Cambreling's reflectiveness and the more abrasive approach of Zender's own 1995 recording with Hans-Peter Blochwitz and the Ensemble Modern. Speeds are swift and urgent, fitting the work on to a single disc where it previously needed two, though nothing feels rushed. The playing is exemplary, and the beautifully balanced recording allows every textural and colouristic shift to register. Apart from a couple of moments of constriction at the top, Prégardien sings with wonderful elegance and unforced sincerity of expression, which makes his swerves into *Sprechgesang* all the more shocking. He's a lighter-voiced, more impulsive protagonist than his father, and altogether more lyrical than Blochwitz, who is inclined to be declamatory. You might have qualms about the work itself but it's hard to imagine it more compellingly done. **Tim Ashley**

Comparative versions:

Blochwitz, Ens Modern, Zender

(9/95) (RCA) 09026 68067-2

C Prégardien, Klangforum Wien, Cambreling

(6/00) (KAIR) 0012002KAI

'Advent Live'

Archer The Linden Tree Carol **Bednall** Noe, noe
Bingham The Clouded Heaven **Britten** A Hymn
 of St Columba **Bullard** Glory to the Christ Child
J Burton Tomorrow shall be my dancing day
Comeau Lux mundi **Gibbons** This is the record
 of John **F Jackson** I know a flower **Joubert**
 There is no rose **J Long** Vigilate **Palestrina** Fuit
 homo missus a Deo **I Shaw** Adam lay ybounden.
 I sing of a maiden **Traditional** The angel Gabriel
 from heaven came (arr E Pettman). The Cherry
 Tree Carol (arr S Cleobury). Tomorrow shall be
 my dancing day (arr D Willcocks)
Vaughan Williams The truth sent from above
 (arr C Robinson) **Watts** The Birth of Speech
The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge /
Andrew Nethsingha
 Signum © SIGCD535 (60' • DDD • T/t)
 Recorded live 2014-17



In the rush to grasp the glittering, commercial excesses of Christmas the

meditative, preparatory season of Advent is frequently overlooked. Therefore, it is with relief and joy that we can welcome this hour-long anthology. Drawn from live BBC Radio broadcasts from 2014-17, these 19 tracks concentrate on music by living composers, many with a strong link to the College, as well as to Cambridge, sung mostly to English texts.

Britten's *A Hymn to St Columba* (1962) makes a strong opener, setting the scene for James Burton's powerful and attractive *Tomorrow shall be my dancing day*, the first of two settings of this text (the other being the better-known one by David Willcocks). Equally impressive are the brace of carols by Ian Shaw – the second of which, *I sing of a maiden*, features the superb harp-playing of Anne Denholm – and Judith Bingham's *The clouded heaven*. Of an older generation of composers, John Joubert's *There is no rose* retains its classic poise and it was a joy to encounter Francis Jackson's *I know a flower* for the first time, with its fresh and flagrant harmony.

For a stronger flavour, James Long's *Vigilate* (2012) fits the bill; likewise Tim Watts's *The Birth of Speech*, which benefits greatly from the stylish violin-playing of Stephanie Childress and Julia Hwang. Of the two tracks from the Renaissance period, Gibbons's *This is the record of John* is the most satisfying, with an excellent contribution from the countertenor Hugh Cutting.

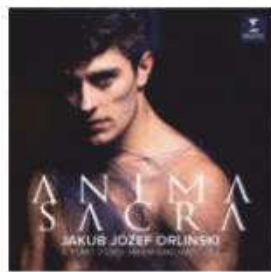
This new disc is an important snapshot of the continuing St John's story, revealing that in recent years, under Andrew

Nethsingha's inspired direction, the choir has retained its renowned clarity, flamboyance and readiness to take risks. The various organ scholars also give splendid support throughout and the whole production is first-class, enhanced by Martin Ennis's excellent notes. Despite the presence of a live audience I caught only one muffled sneeze, in the final ecstatic *Noe, noe* of David Bednall.

Malcolm Riley

'Anima sacra'

Durante Messa a 5 voci - Domine fili unigenite
Fago Confitebor tibi, Domine. Il Faraone
 sommerso - Alla gente a Dio diletta. Tam non
 splendet sol creatus **Feo** Dies irae - Juste judex
 ultionis **Hasse** Sanctus Petrus et Sancta Maria
 Magdalena - Mea tormenta, properate!
Heinichen Alma redemptoris mater **Sarro**
 Messa a 5 voci - Laudamus te **Schiassi** Maria
 vergine al Calvario - L'agnelletta timidetta
Terradellas Dixit Dominus - Donec ponam
Zelenka Gesù al Calvario, ZWV62 - Smanie di
 dolci affetti ... S'una sol lagrima
Jakub Józef Orliński counterten
Il Pomo d'Oro / Maxim Emelyanychev
 Erato © 9029 56337-4 (76' • DDD)



Some really excellent concert performances in London – both in

recital and opera – have whetted the appetite for the Polish countertenor Jakub Józef Orliński's debut solo release. 'Anima sacra' doesn't disappoint. In fact it over-achieves so hard and so determinedly that sometimes you wish both Orliński himself and his record label would just trust their product and relax into it a little.

It's hard to get past the album artwork; numerous images of a bare-chested Orliński swathed artistically in tulle position him firmly as whatever the countertenor equivalent of a barihunk is (countertenor cutie?). It's distracting and ultimately unnecessary – debasing a performer who, on the basis of this *recherché* collection of works, is already a serious artist. Yannis François (whose booklet notes have the energy of a man actually in the archives making discoveries) has worked with Orliński to put together a thoughtful collection of little-known sacred works from the second half of the 17th century – including not just liturgical music but also oratorios and *azioni sacre* – that collide the drama of the opera house with the contemplation of the church.

If Orliński's marble-cool countertenor brings the spiritual, then Maxim Emelyanychev and Il Pomo d'Oro offer some deliciously secular friction. Nicola Fago's solo cantata *Confitebor tibi, Domine* (arguably the best of the eight premiere recordings here) sways and grooves with rhythmic interest – the 'Fidelia omnia' an all-out sacred hoedown – and the roiling, bubbling drama of Hasse's 'Mea tormenta, properate!' reeks of greasepaint and gunpowder.

In the studio at least, Orliński rides this densely textured accompaniment with ease. It's an attractive voice that has something of Jaroussky about it (the unworked purity, the easy legato) but with the greater focus and muscularity of a young Scholl, Zazzo or Davies. There's a tendency though to overcook it, pushing until tone becomes forced and fluttery – not the free spin of natural vibrato but something a bit more gripped and manic. A little more lean back and a little less endeavour, however, and this is a voice with a big future.

Alexandra Coghlan

'Broadway'

Bock She Loves Me - Dear Friend **Guettel** The Light in the Piazza - Fable **Kander** The Visit - Love and love alone/Winter **Kern** Very Warm for May - All the things you are **Lloyd Webber** Song and Dance - Tell me on a Sunday **Pasek/Paul** Dear Evan Hansen - So Big/So Small **Porter** Red, Hot and Blue - Down in the depths (on the ninetieth floor) **Rodgers** The King and I - Something wonderful. The Sound of Music - The sound of music. South Pacific - Loneliness of Evening; Wonderful guy; You've got to be careful tonight^a **Sondheim** Into the Woods - Children will listen^a. A Little Night Music - The Glamorous Life **Sting** The Last Ship - August Winds **Tesori** Violet - Lay down your head **M Wilson** The Music Man - Till there was you **Yeston** Nine - Unusual way
Renée Fleming sop^a **Leslie Odom Jr** voc
BBC Concert Orchestra / Rob Fisher
 Decca © 483 4215DH (64' • DDD)



After her previous forays into jazz and indie-pop, to say nothing of her recent

stint on Broadway as Nettie Fowler in Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Carousel*, it was almost inevitable that a Broadway album would be forthcoming from the world's most glamorous soprano. Her choices are shrewd and wide-ranging, embracing the contemporary and the classic in pretty much equal measure while demonstrating that style in this



Dramatic impact: the London-based chamber choir Pegasus mark the centenary of the First World War Armistice – see review on page 111

repertoire probably has more to do with attitude than technical adjustment. More, but not all.

Curbing that opulent operatic soprano, pulling back on the head-voice and dropping the centre of gravity to a more conversational tone in the middle range is key, of course. In classic repertoire – in songs like ‘Dear Friend’ (from Bock and Harnick’s *She Loves Me*), ‘Till there was you’ (from Meredith Wilson’s *The Music Man*) and, of course, ‘The sound of music’ – her ‘legit’ soprano may need scaling back but it’s also where those songs live, and she’s home free, swooning portamento and all. It’s no accident, of course, that the leading Broadway ladies of today – Audra McDonald, Kelli O’Hara and Laura Benanti – are all legit sopranos at heart.

Another ‘operatically inclined’ number is ‘Fable’ from Adam Guettel’s glorious *The Light in the Piazza*. If I’m going to be picky I’d say that while this is the eleven-o’clock moment in the show – a mother letting her daughter go (something that every mother can relate to) – there is a temptation, with Fleming’s pedigree and vocal equipment, to over-egg it. Its drama is writ a little too large. The final moments, the quiet moments, pull it back inwardly and that’s where it’s most effective.

It’s interesting that the numbers in which she opts for a jazzy take feel most comfortable. Cole Porter’s ‘Down in the depths (on the ninetieth floor)’ sits well for her and she’s super-happy exploring the cabaret sultriness of ‘Love and love alone/Winter’ from Kander and Ebb’s darkly striking *The Visit*. And while I personally wouldn’t want to jazzify one of the greatest songs ever written – Kern and Hammerstein’s ‘All the things you are’ – she slips nicely into its embrace.

There’s only one song that really doesn’t work and perhaps should have been left off the album, and that’s ‘Wonderful guy’ from *South Pacific*. This is where a feisty chest belt is absolutely de rigueur. The euphoric repetitions of ‘I’m in love, I’m in love’ feel like they’re vocally in ‘no man’s land’ for Fleming. Not so ‘The Glamorous Life’ from Sondheim’s *A Little Night Music*. Desiree is such a good fit – an ‘artiste’ whose very nature is perpetually ‘on stage’, larger than life in every respect. The song works better in context, of course (like everything Sondheim wrote), but it’s a good ‘turn’ for Fleming.

My favourite tracks? Well, there are two or three she absolutely nails. So glad she included ‘Lay down your head’ from the

very gifted Jeanine Tesori’s *Violet* – a gorgeous number. Likewise ‘Unusual way’ from Maury Yeston’s *Nine*. And she really gets inside the mother’s song, ‘So Big/So Small’ from my favourite of the current musicals, Pasek and Paul’s *Dear Evan Hansen*. The song’s gentle ‘country’ inflection comes naturally to her and she and we quickly warm to the intimacy of it.

There’s a similar folksy twang to ‘August Winds’ from Sting’s *The Last Ship* – another cracking score – and I personally am so glad she included Andrew Lloyd Webber and Don Black’s ‘Tell me on a Sunday’, one of Lloyd Webber’s most beautiful and elaborate melodies married to one of Black’s most touching lyrics. I did wonder, though, why Fleming didn’t make more of that glorious phrase in the release of the song, ‘Don’t leave in silence’. It’s exactly the kind of moment where I would have expected her operatic instincts and generosity of phrase to kick in.

Familiar territory for the BBC Concert Orchestra, of course, and some lovely arrangements made especially for the album. Not everything convinces me but there’s enough here that does – and her love for the repertoire is palpable.

Edward Seckerson

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Christmas with Sonoro
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Neil Ferris conductor



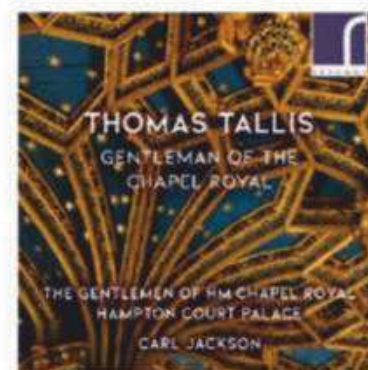
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'For the Fallen'

Dyson To Music **D Guest** For the Fallen **Gurney** Psalm 23. Since I believe in God the Father Almighty **Holst** Nunc dimittis **Mahler** Rückert Lieder – Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen (arr Gottwald) **Rachmaninov** Vespers (All-Night Vigil), Op 37 – Blagoslovi dushe moya gospoda; Nyne otpushcheashi **Ravel** Trois Chansons – No 2, Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis **Reger** Nachtlied, Op 138 No 3 **Stanford** For lo! I raise up, Op 145^a **Traditional** The Dying Soldier (arr Wilberg/Short) **Walford Davies** A Short Requiem **C Wood** Expectans expectavi^a **Pegasus / Matthew Altham** with ^a**Martin Toyer** *org* Signum © SIGCD825 (67' • DDD • T/t)

'Lest We Forget'

Aston So they gave their bodies **Bainton** And I saw a new heaven **Elgar** We will remember them **Holst** Turn back, O man, Op 36a No 2. I vow to thee, my country **Ireland** Greater love hath no man. Te Deum **Howells** Rhapsody No 3, Op 17^a **Parry** Crossing the Bar. Songs of Farewell – No 4, There is an old belief **Scholefield** The day thou gavest, Lord, is ended **Stanford** For lo! I raise up, Op 145. Organ Sonata No 2, 'Eroica' – Verdun^a **The Choir of Chichester Cathedral / Charles Harrison** ^a*org* with **Timothy Ravalde** *org* Signum © SIGCD562 (65' • DDD • T)



Marking the centenary of the November 1918 Armistice, these two discs from Signum present two very different interpretations of choral music from the First World War. The only piece common to both is Stanford's *For lo! I raise up*, delivered with measured control by Charles Harrison and his Chichester Cathedral Choir, and with great dramatic flair by Matthew Altham's Pegasus singers.

High drama is very much to the fore in the Pegasus disc, the programme ranging beyond the deep trenches of the English cathedral repertory into contemporaneous works from Reger, Ravel, Rachmaninov and Mahler. And before anyone points out that Mahler had died four years before the First World War, or that this arrangement of one of his *Rückert Lieder* was made by Clytus Gottwald, born 11 years after the war ended, let me point them in the direction of Pegasus chairman, Samir Savant, who writes that Mahler's music mirrors 'the decadence and self-absorption of the last years of the Austro-Hungarian empire'.

It is not through choice of music that Pegasus provide dramatic impact but through Altham's fervent direction. Making no concessions to the small-scale nature of the programme, he throws every emotional weapon in his armoury at the music, giving us oozing pathos in Douglas Guest's heartfelt if sentimental setting of Laurence Binyon's iconic text, profound introspection in Reger's *Nachtlied* and nerve-shattering explosiveness at the close of Holst's *Nunc dimittis*.

His singers respond with alacrity, even to the extent of over-stretching themselves vocally. George Dyson's *To Music* reveals their beautifully blended tone; but, in addition to an unnerving hootiness of tone in Ravel's 'Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis', the top notes of the Mahler have an ugly edge to them, made all the more ugly by being juxtaposed above such gorgeous choral tone.

If Pegasus are unafraid to go over the top in the cause of the music's drama, Chichester Cathedral Choir are more restrained, keeping emotional heads down and reserving dramatic assaults for the occasional big moments – as in Ireland's *Greater love* – where these singers lack for nothing in bravery. As with the Pegasus disc, not everything on the Chichester disc belongs to the First World War; but Peter Aston's setting of famous lines from Pericles' funeral oration at the time of the Peloponnesian War fits in well not only because of its references to the Last Post but because of its mood of prayerful introspection.

Chichester Cathedral Choir are relative strangers to commercial CD, so this disc provides a welcome opportunity for the outside world to hear them in action. And with such understated yet beautifully moulded singing as they give us in Bainton's *And I saw a new heaven* and Parry's *Crossing the Bar* one can only hope for more.

The disc includes a couple of organ solos played by Harrison himself. Most impressive of these is his flamboyant performance of the last movement (appropriately subtitled 'Verdun') of Stanford's Second Organ Sonata. The explosive combination of virtuoso flares and shards of the Marseillaise effectively counterbalance the disc's overriding atmosphere of prayerful restraint.

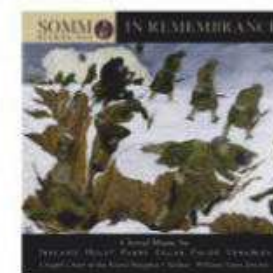
Marc Rochester

'In Remembrance'

Elgar They are at rest **Fauré** Requiem, Op 48 (arr Farrington)^a **D Guest** For the Fallen **C Harris** O valiant hearts^b **Holst** I vow to thee, my country^b. Ode to Death (arr Farrington)^c **Ireland** Greater love hath no man^d **Parry**

Jerusalem^b. Songs of Farewell – No 4, There is an old belief **Stanford** Justorum animae, Op 38 No 1 **I Venables** Requiem aeternam^e

^a**Katy Hill**, ^d**Leah Jackson** *sops* ^{ad}**Gareth Brynmor John** *bar* ^{ac}**James Orford**, ^{abde}**Hugh Rowlands** *org* ^b**Chelsea Pensioners' Choir; Chapel Choir of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea / William Vann** Somm Céleste © SOMMCD0187 (81' • DDD • T/t)



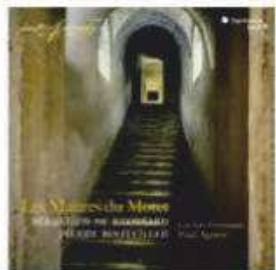
In the centenary of the end of the First World War, this recording features a variety of vocal works written before, during and after the war, all of which, in some way, bear the badge of courage, sacrifice and loss, and equally that sense of trauma and catharsis which Britain had to bear in the years immediately after the conflict. As a chorister in the 1960s I can still remember the lines of the British Legion who would parade up to the village church and the war memorial to hear the names of the dead read out. My memories of those chilly, solemn November Sunday mornings are still vivid. They were occasions charged with deep emotion and remembrance which the music of this CD animates only too readily.

The sounds of Parry's *Jerusalem* (written after all for the Fight for Right movement in 1916 to counter German propaganda and to bolster national morale), Charles Harris's *O valiant hearts* and Gustav Holst's setting of Cecil Spring Rice's 'I vow to thee my country' are almost unbearably moving. Directed by William Vann, the Choir of the Royal Hospital Chelsea, with its clear, ringing tone, provides beautifully nuanced performances, especially of the *a cappella* items, Stanford's numinous introit *Justorum animae*, Parry's six-part 'There is an old belief' (written during the early part of the war) and Elgar's elegiac *They are at rest*. And no recording of this repertoire would be complete without reference to Laurence Binyon's immutable words 'For the Fallen', sung here in a setting by Douglas Guest, onetime organist of Westminster Abbey and who fought in the Royal Artillery during the Second World War. John Ireland's *Greater love hath no man* is sung with stirring commitment. Written in 1912, the anthem soon found itself expressing so many public sentiments of the war after the horrifying list of casualties was published from day to day; it received many performances. Holst's fine *Ode to Death*, composed in 1919 and here performed in an arrangement for choir and organ by Iain Farrington, is a powerful elegy written in memory of his friend Cecil Coles, who was killed during the German

Army's last major offensive in 1918. It shares serene moments of painful poignancy with Fauré's Requiem (again in Farrington's attractive arrangement), a work which focuses not on judgement but on eternal rest and notions of paradise. The juxtaposition with Ian Venables's contemporary (rather Howellsian) setting of *Requiem aeternam* (2017) is therefore a fitting one. **Jeremy Dibble**

'Les maîtres du motet'

Bouteiller *Missa pro defunctis* **Brossard** Ave verum corpus. Miserere mei Deus. Stabat mater
Les Arts Florissants / **Paul Agnew**
Harmonia Mundi © HAF890 5300 (67' • DDD • T/t)



A collection of French Baroque music without so much as a fan flutter of courtly secularity or a mouthful of cake, this new release from Paul Agnew and Les Arts Florissants flings wide the gates of Versailles and heads out into the regions – to the cathedrals and churches where music of quite another kind flourished during the reign of Louis XIV.

Composer Sébastien de Brossard (1655-1730) may not be a household name but it's thanks to him that many works from the early decades of the 18th century survive, collected and preserved in manuscripts he presented to the royal library in 1724. This recording pairs Brossard's own *Miserere mei Deus* and large-scale *Stabat mater* with one of the gems of his collection, the *Missa pro defunctis* of Pierre Bouteiller (c1655-c1717).

The harmonised psalm chant of the *Miserere*, passed here between a soloist and semi-chorus, inevitably draws comparison with Allegri. Less highly coloured in either harmony or ornamentation, Brossard's setting is nevertheless an attractive work. Neither this nor the *Stabat mater*, however, truly mines their emotive, penitential texts as we hear Charpentier do in his *Leçons de Ténèbres*, for example. To all intents and purposes this is pure music, throwing all focus on vocal tone and inflection.

Les Arts Florissants are in good company here, with recent recordings by Hervé Niquet and an all-male incarnation of Le Concert Spirituel and David Bates's La Nuova Musica. The Niquet is an austere affair but La Nuova Musica's account (complete with superb soloists) is all warmth and drama, eclipsing Les Arts Florissants' oddly wan and unfocused sopranos by some way. It's a different story in the Bouteiller, where the group's blend finds its groove

and the singers swell to fill the greater expressive and dramatic space of the work.

The comparison here is with Les Voix Humaines' recording – an intimate, almost domestic account with single voices that works beautifully on its own terms but can't compete with the aural opulence of this spacious, resonant new recording.

Alexandra Coghlan

Stabat mater – selected comparisons:

Concert Spirituel, Niquet (2/11) (GLOS) GCD921621

Nuova Musica, Bates (10/16) (HARM) HMU80 7659

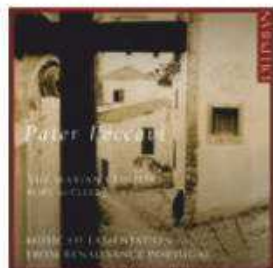
Missa pro defunctis – selected comparison:

Voix Humaines (ATMA) ACD2 2259

'Pater peccavi'

'Music of Lamentation from
Renaissance Portugal'

Brito Heu Domine **Cardoso** Lamentations for Maundy Thursday **A Fernandez** Circumdederunt me **Lobo** Audivi vocem. *Missa Veni Domine*. **Pater peccavi** **Magalhães** *Commissa mea* **Morago** *Commissa mea*. De profundis. Emendemus in melius. Oculi mei semper ad Dominum. Versa est in luctum
The Marian Consort / **Rory McCleery**
Delphian © DCD34205 (52' • DDD • T/t)



This exquisite late-Renaissance Portuguese polyphonic repertoire is as richly expressive as it is politically poised. Written under the rule of the Spanish Habsburgs from 1580 to 1640, works by Duarte Lobo (c1565-1646) and Manuel Cardoso (1566-1650) are frequently drawn towards texts of mourning and lamentation as they long for an end to foreign rule and yearn for the restoration of a Portuguese monarchy. All this becomes more stylistically vivid when we note both composers outlived Monteverdi, albeit only slightly.

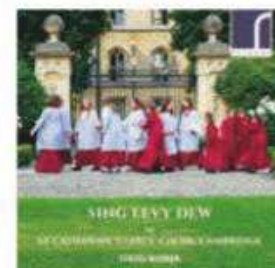
This beautiful new album from The Marian Consort is surely one of the best one-to-a-part ensemble recordings of this repertoire. Throughout the programme they nurture a warm blend while drawing out long polyphonic threads to expressive ends. The disc opens with Cardoso's six-voice *Lamentations for Maunday Thursday* from his final published collection; unhurried, expressive and with a pleasing core to their sound, the sopranos in particular create a confident, glistening tone with generous phrasing. Several larger ensembles, notably The Sixteen ('Renaissance Portugal: The Sacred Music of Cardoso and Lôbo' – Coro, 8/94) and Westminster Cathedral Choir ('Masterpieces of Portuguese Polyphony' – Hyperion) have recorded

similarly impassioned Cardoso performances and as such are a likely influence. The Marian Consort, however, add an intensely charged intimacy to the mix.

The premiere recording of Lobo's *Missa Veni Domine* forms the backbone to the programme. It is a parody/imitation work drawing on a motet by Palestrina; Rory McCleery explains potential Sebastianist connections with this text in his booklet notes (the hoped for return of King Sebastian lost in a military campaign of 1578). I love this performance, full of energy and highly responsive to the text. The *Sanctus-Benedictus* in particular shows the flexibility of this ensemble in responding to different textures. The album highlight for me, however, is *Circumdederunt me*, a setting of a funeral text by Aires Fernandez. Here the phrases reach upwards and overlap in great arches, which the singers perform with a yearning intensity which is just exquisite. **Edward Breen**

'Sing Levy Dew'

Beamish Seven Songs **Britten** Friday Afternoons, Op 7 **Richard Rodney Bennett** The Aviary. The Insect World **Dove** It sounded as if the Streets were running **Skempton** Five Poems of Mary Webb
The St Catharine's Girls' Choir, Cambridge / **Edward Wickham** with **Frederick Brown** *pf*
Resonus © RES10221 (66' • DDD • T)



In the decade since its foundation, in 2008, the Girls' Choir of St Catharine's College, Cambridge, have garnered well-deserved plaudits for the conviction, warmth and immaculate control in their singing under their founder, Edward Wickham. All these qualities are present in abundance on this new disc of secular British works for upper voices. Its 36 tracks constitute a veritable box of delights, full of polished gems.

Opening with Jonathan Dove's three *a cappella* Emily Dickinson settings of 2006, the 22 singers make light work of any contrapuntal challenges, emphasising the dramatic and ecstatic elements of the poetry. Diction and intonation are exemplary. Frederick Brown joins the choir for Richard Rodney Bennett's two unison song collections from 40 years earlier, *The Insect World* and *The Aviary*, clearly relishing the delicious piano accompaniments. Of the former, 'Clock-a-clay' stands out, as does 'The Bird's Lament' from the latter. Howard Skempton's timeless and tireless *Five Poems of Mary Webb* are a masterclass in triadic writing and should be heard by



Richly expressive: the Marian Consort draw out the long polyphonic threads of their Portuguese Renaissance programme with exquisite beauty

every serious student of harmony. The balance between the three parts is excellent.

The disc's premiere recording is of Sally Beamish's unaccompanied *Seven Songs* (1990), and in some ways is the toughest music both to sing and to assimilate. The final one of the set, 'Sunset', is the most striking. Composed for his brother's school in Prestatyn, Benjamin Britten's *Friday Afternoons* dates from 1933-35 and polishes up as fresh as ever. It is good to hear the oft-sung 'A New Year Carol' in its original context and to marvel, once again, at how Britten squeezes out every last drop of compositional technique in 'Old Abram Brown'. As its haunting refrain concludes the disc, one hopes that this talented group will explore further the riches of the pre-war English repertory. **Malcolm Riley**

'Vienna: fin de siècle'

Berg Sieben Frühe Lieder **A Mahler** Fünf Lieder - No 1, Die stille Stadt; No 3, Laue Sommernacht; No 5, Ich wandle unter Blumen. Vier Lieder - No 1, Licht in der Nacht **Schoenberg** Vier Lieder, Op 2 **Webern** Fünf Lieder nach Gedichten von Richard Dehmel **Wolf** Mignon Lieder **Zemlinsky** Lieder, Op 2, Book 2 - No 1, Frühlingstag; No 6, Empfängnis. Gesänge, Op 5 - No 1, Schlaf nur ein; No 6, Tiefe Sehnsucht. Fünf Gesänge, Op 7 - No 1, Da waren zwei Kinder; No 2, Entbietung; No 4, Irmelin Rose

Barbara Hannigan *sop* **Reinbert de Leeuw** *pf*
Alpha © ALPHA393 (78' • DDD • T/t)



After a well-received album of Satie for the French composer's anniversary, Barbara Hannigan and Reinbert de Leeuw (having transitioned from *Winter & Winter* to *Alpha*) present a generous programme of *fin de siècle* Viennese songs. In a booklet conversation they describe this as music 'at the edge of tonality, and also at the end of it'. Though they also admit it's music rooted in a near century-long tradition started by Schubert, there's very much the sense of these songs being approached from the other side, glancing back knowingly from a post-war perspective.

Hannigan's approach, then, is not what we're used to. In many of the songs there's the sense that she's embodying one of her most famous roles, Berg's Lulu; I found myself imagining a waif-like protagonist wandering through shadowy, dreamlike landscapes. The delivery is intimate, confiding and almost coquettish. De Leeuw offers gentle, patient and discreet accompaniment. Hannigan's

voice is lithe and flexible rather than rich and firm; she strokes the vocal line lovingly rather than grasping it; her German is languid and unpercussive – often difficult to decipher. You might, like me, find yourself thinking more of the cabaret than the concert hall.

At times it's supremely seductive. There's no denying the erotic charge she communicates, for example, in Schoenberg's Dehmel settings (listen to the final phrase of 'Schenk mir deinen goldenen Kamm', for example). You'll struggle not to be carried away, too, with her way with the early Zemlinsky songs – such marvellous pieces in themselves. And her high notes in Berg's 'Schilflied' are difficult to resist.

But several of Hannigan's touches strike me, if not as inauthentic (to raise the question of authenticity is to open a can of worms), then at least as overly affected. High notes regularly float airily before being filled out, and there are swoops and slides aplenty (listen to Webern's 'Am Ufer' or 'Helle Nacht'). Occasionally I longed for something more straightforward, objective even, especially in the more 'traditional' Wolf numbers that conclude the disc. But, as usual with Hannigan, there's some compelling, fascinating singing here. **Hugo Shirley**

WHAT NEXT?

Do you have a favourite piece of music and want to explore further? Our monthly feature suggests some musical journeys that venture beyond the most familiar works, with some recommended versions. This month, **Andrew Mellor**'s point of departure is ...

Sibelius's Symphony No 7 (1924)

Carl Stoeckel compared Sibelius's conducting at Carnegie Hall, New York, in 1914 to someone 'reading a mighty poem and unfettered by the necessity of giving anything so obvious as a beat'. Perhaps the music (*The Oceanides*) didn't need a beat. Increasingly, Sibelius was becoming aware that inherent kinetic energy could take his pieces wherever they needed to go. His last surviving symphony, of 1924, offers up a superlative example of the idea. It lives a whole life in its short, single-movement span. It was born of abrasion, squalor and addiction, yet is profound, majestic and humbling. It paved the way for new musical designs from Stockholm to San Francisco. Paavo Berglund, a great Sibelius champion, has the symphony's measure in a notable live recording made with the LPO in 2003.

● London Philharmonic Orchestra / Paavo Berglund (LPO, 12/05)

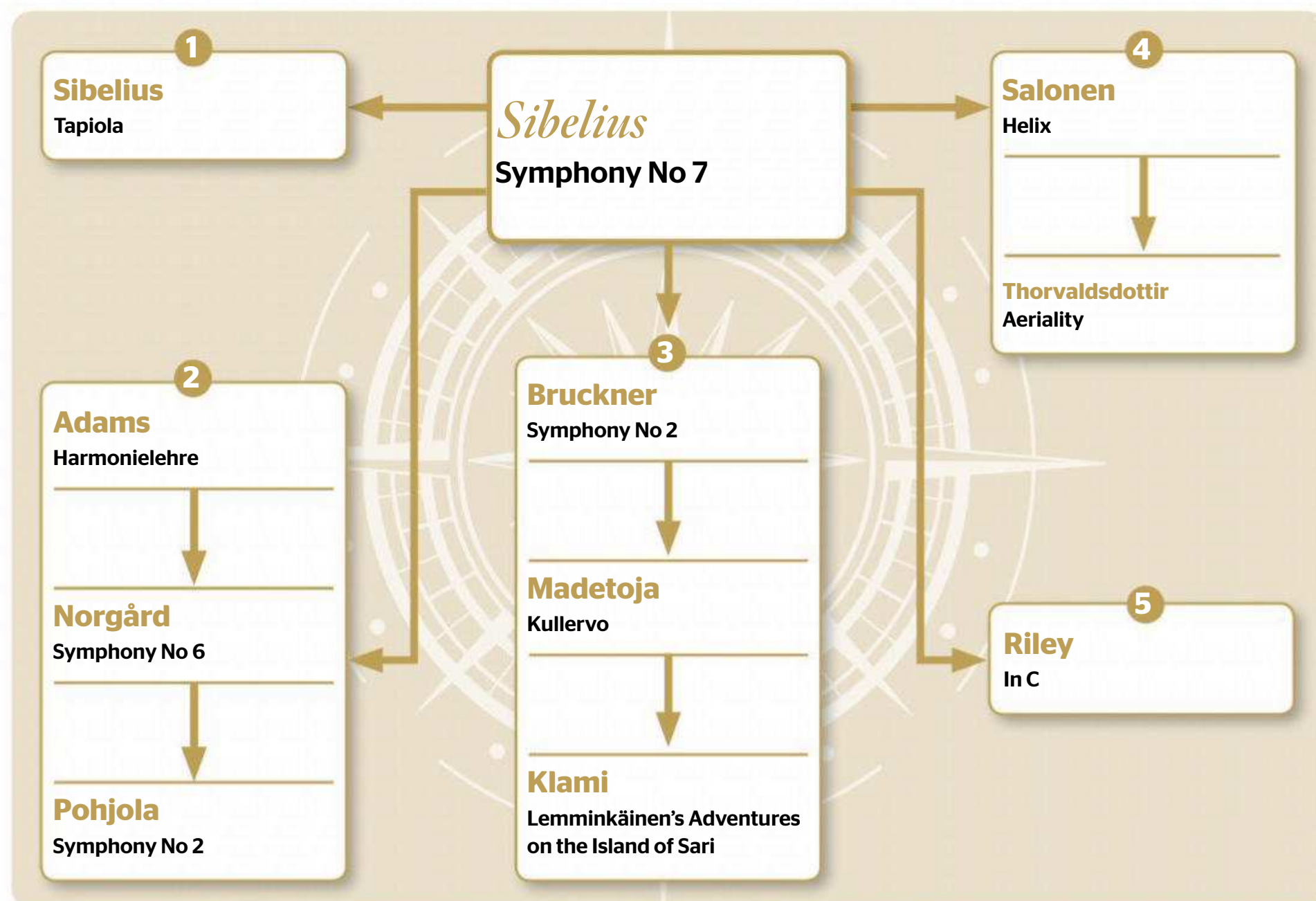
1 *The beginning of the end*

Sibelius Tapiola (1926) After the Seventh Symphony, Sibelius took the process of distillation further with the tone poem *Tapiola*, which clings resolutely to one key and uses just one motif (it can hardly be called a theme). *Tapiola* is both a culmination and a new dawn in Sibelius's thinking about instrumental colour: how a particular shade of orchestral brown might control pages of musical progress on its own. The only place Sibelius could go next was into total silence.

● Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra / Leif Segerstam (Ondine, 7/96)

2 *Keep the river flowing*

Adams Harmonielehre (1985) John Adams's admiration for Sibelius's Symphony No 7 is a matter of record. The American's early work was



concerned with the working of cells of material and on developing through instantaneous repetition – elements present in Sibelius's Seventh but heard even more clearly in works such as *The Wood Nymph*. In *Harmonielehre*, a symphony in all but name, we hear how deeply the American absorbed the Seventh's suggestion that two speeds can operate at once.

● City of Birmingham SO / Simon Rattle (EMI/Warner Classics, 6/94)

Nørgård Symphony No 6 (1999) The Danish composer Per Nørgård remains the most tangible living link with Sibelius and is fascinated by the way that the Finnish composer's symphonies flow with gravitational inevitability. Nørgård's symphonies (eight so far) are strikingly different from one another, but the Sixth is among the purest manifestations of the symphonic principle of no argument, no victory, just a natural, beautiful process tipped into action and then brought to rest.

● Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra / John Storgårds (Dacapo, 7/16)

Pohjola Symphony No 2 (2006) In Seppo Pohjola's symphonies we hear a progression of the idea that a tiny motif can be combined with gentle rhythmic manipulation to induce a kinetic musical journey. Pohjola's Symphony No 2 lays that theory out in basic terms, as this sharp performance under Sakari Oramo shows. Visit YouTube for a performance, from the same musicians, of Pohjola's Third (2011), in which the weave has become more complex but less complicated.

● Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Sakari Oramo (Alba, 11/12)

3 *Contemporaneous currents*

Bruckner Symphony No 2 (1872) Sibelius was only six when Bruckner completed his Second Symphony, but it's obvious that Bruckner's vocabulary – long pedal notes, figurations that weave to form tapestries, and cell-like motifs that drive music in constant transition – had a strong bearing on Sibelius's whole idea of a symphony from his first to his last. This score, with its telling use of silence, may well have formed the perfect tutor.

● Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra / Herbert Blomstedt (Querstand, 11/13)

Madetoja Kullervo (1913) Sibelius's language was radical enough for it to be ignored by plenty of talented contemporaries. Leevi Madetoja might not have ignored Sibelius per se, but he admired d'Indy and Wagner at least as much and there's something of Zemlinsky's longing and romantic sweep behind his otherwise tempestuous take on the Kullervo story from Finland's national epic *The Kalevala*. It was written in 1913, two decades after Sibelius's choral approach to the same legend.

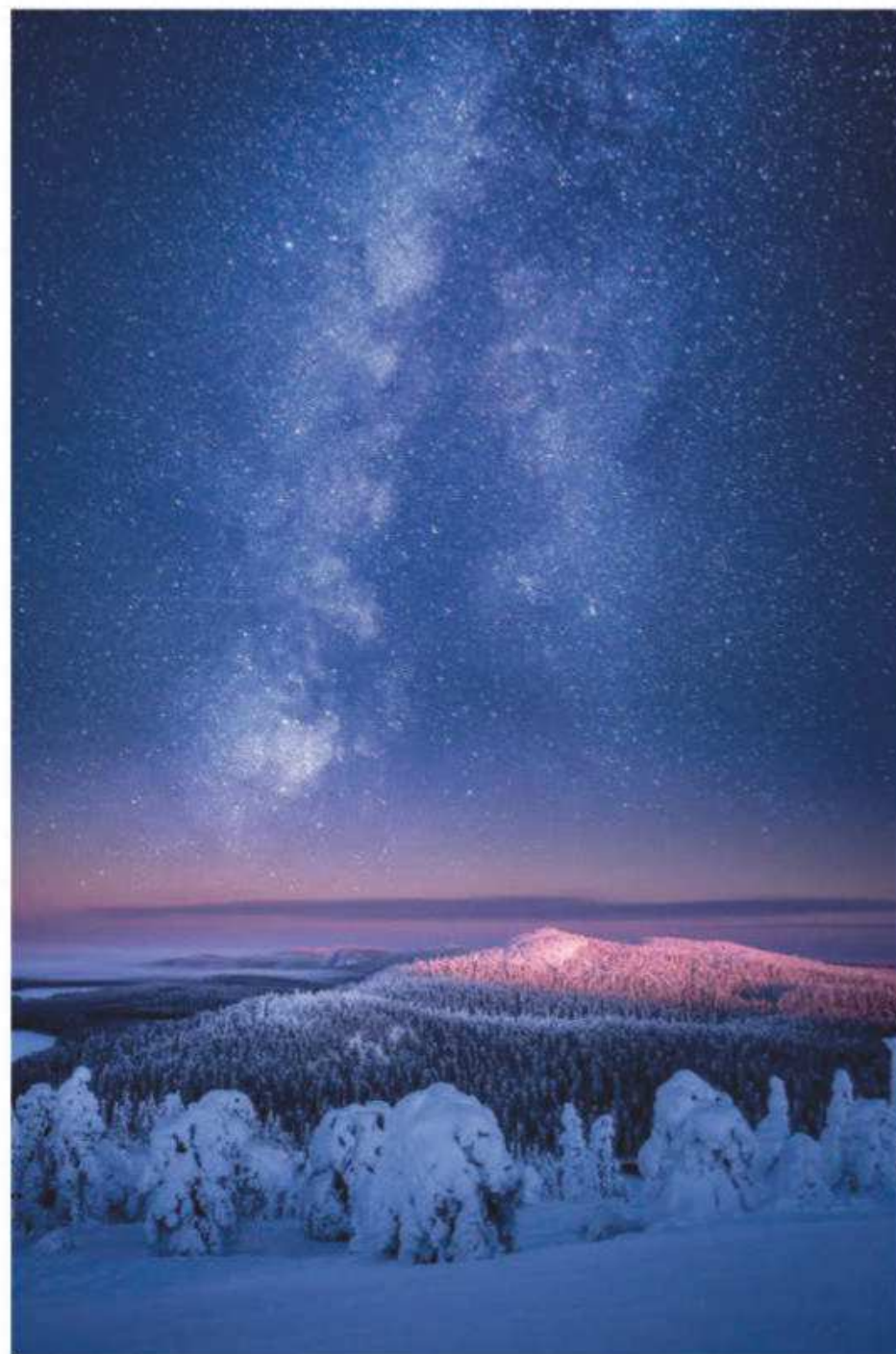
● Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra / John Storgårds (Ondine, 4/13)

Klami Lemminkäinen's Adventures on the Island of Sari (1933) Uno Klami took as much inspiration from *The Kalevala* as Sibelius did, and his musical language was almost as uncompromising. It is also more bright and primitive, reflecting his admiration for Ravel and Stravinsky. Klami appears to pay his dues to Sibelius's *Tapiola* in the swaying tree-scape that opens his flamboyant symphonic poem based on the same episode from *The Kalevala* that Sibelius set with such architectural grandeur.

● Turku Philharmonic Orchestra / Jorma Panula (Naxos)

4 *Nordic nature music*

Salonen Helix (2005) Where Sibelius's and Thorvaldsdottir's (below) nature world is fluid, the river shifting in velocity and depth, Esa-Pekka Salonen's is more studied and scientific. Like a generated image of the structure of DNA, his work *Helix* spirals towards its natural end point



The Finnish landscape was a profound source of inspiration for Sibelius

with a mobility that is consistent almost until the last moment, while the textures change like a twisting Rubik's Cube. 'It was with the minimalist composers that we got the idea of pulse back,' Salonen once said.

● Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra / Esa-Pekka Salonen (DG, 3/09)

Thorvaldsdottir Aeriality (2011) The Icelandic composer Anna Thorvaldsdottir observed recently that 'nature tells you brown is never just brown.' In Thorvaldsdottir's music, and particularly in the orchestral monolith *Aeriality*, a very Nordic distillation of ideas is combined with the spectral proposition Sibelius pioneered: that instrumental timbre and colour are legitimate means with which a composer might let a piece of formally rigorous music unfold. The piece sounds uncannily Icelandic in this performance.

● Iceland Symphony Orchestra / Ilan Volkov (DG)

5 *Back to basics*

Riley In C (1968) American minimalism was born of many things but Sibelius's slow process of distilling his voice to the point of silence was arguably one of them. If Sibelius could have written a symphony that didn't shift from a single key, he would have (some might argue that, in *Tapiola*, he did precisely that). Terry Riley's *In C* – in the same key as Sibelius's symphony – cleared the decks for an exploration of what might be done without modulation.

● Ars Nova Copenhagen / Paul Hillier (Marco Polo)

Available to stream at Qobuz, Apple Music and Spotify

Opera



Mark Pullinger contrasts a pair of DVDs of Verdi's *Giovanna d'Arco*:

'At La Scala, Netrebko is in magnificent voice – she is becoming one of the great Verdi sopranos of our day' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 121**



Alexandra Coghlan enjoys some elaborately staged Vivaldi:

'This production is a gorgeous sprawl of period sensation and spectacle, high on camp and low on concept' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 123**

Britten

Death in Venice

John Daszak *ten* Gustav von Aschenbach
Leigh Melrose *bar* Traveller/Elderly Fop/
 Old Gondolier/Hotel Manager/Hotel Barber/
 Leader of the Players/Voice of Dionysus
Anthony Roth Costanzo *counterten* ... Voice of Apollo
Tomasz Borczyk *dncr* Tadzio
Duncan Rock *bar* English Clerk/Venice Guide
Chorus and Orchestra of the Teatro Real, Madrid /
Alejo Pérez

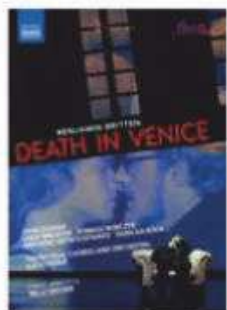
Stage director **Willy Decker**

Video director **François Roussillon**

Naxos (F) DVD 2 110577; (F) Blu-ray NBD0076V
 (152' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD5.0, DTS5.0 &
 PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live, December 17 & 19, 2014

Includes synopsis



It is good to see *Death in Venice* making its way around Europe after a lengthy period of neglect following Britten's death.

This production by the German director Willy Decker comes live from the Teatro Real in Madrid, though it had already been seen a few years earlier in Barcelona.

As his previous productions of *Peter Grimes* and *Billy Budd* had shown, Decker sees Britten's operas in stylised terms. This suits *Death in Venice* better than some of the others, not least thanks to the symbolism written into the libretto by Myfanwy Piper, from the multiple nemesis characters played by the baritone to Venice itself, alluring in its beauty, deadly with the threat of cholera.

The staging is intelligent, spare, rather dark. A few scenes capture Venice's fatally sweet mystery, notably the lagoon ride in a gondola like a giant coffin, but for the most part Decker's imagery is focused on probing symbolic figures of death and sexuality. He suggests that Aschenbach and his sevenfold nemesis are different sides of one person, which is not a new idea, but does break new ground in how far he is ready to bring the story's sexual

undercurrent to the surface. At one point Aschenbach imagines himself kissing Tadzio and later dancing with him naked. This does not leave much to the imagination and Britten would surely have been horrified by it.

John Daszak comes to the role of Aschenbach with more voice than most of his predecessors. He is dignified and unexaggerated in his portrayal, perhaps even a touch over-formal, and he cannot equal Peter Pears's liquid legato in the lyrical passages. Leigh Melrose, given the look of a satyr, offers vivid characterisations in the nemesis roles, though he has been encouraged to overplay the fop and, *en travesti*, the leader of the players. Anthony Roth Costanzo sings a suitably ethereal Apollo and Tomasz Borczyk, sporting a scallywag's scarecrow haircut, is a native Polish Tadzio.

Unfortunately, the musical performance under conductor Alejo Pérez sometimes holds fire and the Orchestra of the Teatro Real, at least as recorded here, sound rather wan and grey. There is also some trimming of the Evangelist-like recitatives.

There is some strong competition. Either of the DVDs from La Fenice or English National Opera is preferable. Both offer high levels of visual beauty, with Italian style in the first case and exceptional lighting in the latter. Throw in Edward Gardner's compelling musical grip at ENO and the Opus Arte disc is a clear winner.

Richard Fairman

Selected comparisons:

Bartoletti (2/11) (DYNA) DVD 33608; Blu-ray 55608

Gardner (7/14) (OPAR) DVD OA1130D;

Blu-ray OABD7141D

Handel

Serse

Gaëlle Arquez *mez* Serse
Elizabeth Sutphen *sop* Romilda
Lawrence Zazzo *counterten* Arsamene
Tanja Ariane Baumgartner *mez* Amastre
Louise Alder *sop* Atalanta
Thomas Faulkner *bass* Elviro
Brandon Cedel *bass-bar* Ariodate

Frankfurt Opera and Museum Orchestra / Constantinos Carydis

Stage director **Tilmann Köhler**

Video director **Tiziano Mancini**

C Major Entertainment (F) (2) DVD 747908;

(F) Blu-ray 748004 (3h' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS5.1 &
 PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live, January 2017



From *Figaro* and *Così* downwards, comic opera stagings today rarely escape without a

disturbing final twist. This *Serse* from Frankfurt runs true to type. 'It comes to a happy ending', proclaims the sketchy booklet note. 'Arsamene and Romilda, as well as Xerxes and Amastre, find each other again.' Well, that's not what we see here. At the hasty denouement, Amastre, formerly abandoned by Serse, holds a pistol first to his head, then to her own, before Serse briefly 'repents'. As the curtain falls Amastre looks traumatised, while Serse, having threatened all and sundry, seems about to shoot himself. All this goes right against the grain of Handel's serene, pensive final *coro* hymning true love.

You might say that this sour ending is the logical outcome of director Tilmann Köhler's vision, where the tyrannical, self-regarding Serse is capricious to the point of instability, liable to turn vicious at any moment. In his Act 1 aria 'Di tacere' he seems on the verge of raping Romilda, the object of his infatuation. In the libretto and Handel's music she is presented as the more serious of the two sisters, unswervingly devoted to Serse's brother Arsamene. Here she is as flighty as her sister Atalanta, sexually attracted to Serse, as the booklet photo makes clear. Things are further complicated by an unscripted attraction between Atalanta and Arsamene. There are cat fights between the sisters; and at one point we get a freeze frame of the 'wrong' pairings that evokes the partner-swapping of *Così fan tutte*. It's my guess that *Così*'s ambivalences and



John Daszak and Tomasz Borczyk star in an intelligent and spare production of Britten's *Death in Venice* from Madrid

problematic ending influenced Köhler's whole conception of *Serse*.

Yet while the director plays up the elements of chaos (epitomised by the set's progressively trashed dinner table) and incipient cruelty, his modern-dress staging, complete with video installations, is theatrically compelling and psychologically convincing. In a uniformly fine, camera-friendly cast, all the singers throw themselves with gusto into their roles and interact vividly. Amid the production's physicality, Köhler is unafraid of stillness at moments of reflection, whether in the arias for the put-upon Arsamene – movingly performed by the deep-toned countertenor Lawrence Zazzo – Amastre's tender 'Cagion son io', or the chastened Atalanta's minuet song 'Voi mi dite', sung with poise and grace by Louise Alder.

Earlier in the opera Alder plays the minx to the life as she sharpens her claws in pursuit of Arsamene. Her feeling for the Handelian line and sparkling coloratura are matched by the American soprano Elizabeth Sutphen, whose wilful, strongly sung Romilda is emphatically not a woman to be messed with. Tanja Ariane Baumgartner's powerful mezzo catches both Amastre's outrage (not least in a sulphurous 'Anima infida') and her vulnerability. Of the two basses, Brandon

Cedel sings with sturdy resonance as the worthy-but-dim general Ariodate, while Thomas Faulkner's amusing but unhammed Elviro irresistibly suggests a proto-Leporello in his backchat with his master Arsamene. As the trigger of the opera's comic-cruel mayhem, Gaëlle Arquez rightly dominates, vocally and dramatically, in the huge role of Serse, written for the castrato-from-hell Caffarelli. Her warm, flexible mezzo soars easily above the stave, she phrases generously, and brings a mingled fire and intense pathos to Serse's central *aria di bravura* 'Se bramate'.

Constantinos Carydis sets languorous tempos in one or two numbers and can arbitrarily introduce solo strings where Handel prescribes *tutti*. For reasons I can't fathom, Act 2 ends not with Romilda's avowal of enduring love 'Chi cede al furore', here displaced to Act 3, but with Serse's meditative 'Il core spera', which is then cut off in mid-sentence. But on the whole Carydis's direction, always responsive to the singers, meshes well with the production – though the alert orchestra can suffer in the balance. If Köhler's *Serse* leaves a slightly nasty taste in the mouth, I enjoyed it at least as much as Nicholas Hytner's famous ENO production that balances elegant artifice with clever comic gags (Philips, 5/93). And for freshness and consistency of

singing, the Frankfurt performance wins hands down. **Richard Wigmore**

Massenet

La Navarraise

Aleksandra Kurzak *mez* Anita
Roberto Alagna *ten* Araquil
George Andguladze *bass* Garrido
Brian Kontes *bar* Remigio
Michael Anthony McGee *bar* Bustamente
Issachah Savage *ten* Ramon
New York Choral Ensemble; Opera Orchestra of New York / Alberto Veronesi

Warner Classics © 8029 56057-0 (44' • DDD)
 Includes synopsis and French libretto



'As for the work itself', wrote George Bernard Shaw for *The World* on the occasion of the

opera's Covent Garden premiere in June 1894, 'there is hardly anything to be said in face of the frankness with which Massenet has modelled it on *Cavalleria*. He has not composed an opera: he has made up a prescription ...'

The Girl from Navarre is truly a cloning of both the style and the content of Mascagni's pioneering *verismo* opera. It is also most economical. In barely three-quarters of an

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hour (alongside Mascagni's 70-plus) Massenet manages all of two acts, an orchestral entr'acte intermezzo, choruses of soldiers both at war and play, a love duet and a confrontation scene, a father/son/lover dispute and a mad scene (the finale). The opera's fate, following initial success (sometimes as an early double bill with *Cav* before *Pagliacci* invariably took that place), was to fade from the repertoire with one-off performances – and, later, recordings – occurring roughly every 30 years at the whim of individual divas or conductors.

Why? A lot of the music is beautifully and memorably realised both melodically and through the orchestra – the French composer was at this stage of his career a more mature man of the theatre than Mascagni. Yet this music inhabits and illustrates the libretto rather than transforms it. For all its directness (detractors call this 'crudity') *Cavalleria rusticana*'s characters become true archetypes whereas *La Navarraise*'s remain pasteboard functionaries for whom we feel little. We never know who Araquil is, or why, after such passionate declarations in Act 1, he throws away his love for Anita (the girl) with sudden fits of jealousy and moral outrage. His death seems over-convenient in terms of timing and Grand Guignol in terms of effect. Anita has something of the obsessiveness in love of bygone Italian opera heroines. But it's hard to relate to her mercenary mission to obtain a dowry by murdering the Carlist general for money, even if we feel sympathy for her not being allowed to marry Araquil for lack of funds.

The present issue is a belated celebration of the Opera Orchestra of New York's intended return to full-time activity in 2010, reuniting many of the principals of that concert but now with Aleksandra Kurzak as the heroine. Veronesi, the then successor-elect of founding maestro Eve Queler, conducts with much élan and the cast are in good shape. Alagna is passionate but never hysterical in tracking the extremes of Araquil's emotions. Kurzak lacks only the colour of character that Lucia Popp, no less, brought to the role of Anita in an early 1970s recording under Antonio de Almeida now on Sony. If you wanted one *Navarraise* that should still be your choice, creditable as this new release is. **Mike Ashman**

Comparative version:

de Almeida (6/75th) (SONY) 19075 81126-2

Puccini

Madama Butterfly

Ermonela Jaho *sop*..... Madama Butterfly
Marcelo Puente *ten*.....Pinkerton
Scott Hendricks *bar*.....Sharpless
Elizabeth DeShong *mez*..... Suzuki

Chorus and Orchestra of the Royal Opera House / Sir Antonio Pappano

Stage directors Moshe Leiser and Patrice Caurier

Video director Matthew Woodward

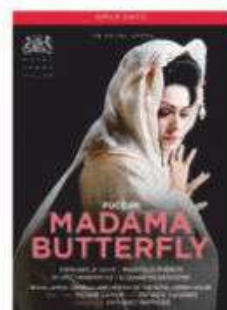
Opus Arte (DVD) OA1268D; (Blu-ray) OABD7244D
 (126' + 12' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1, DD5.1 & LPCM stereo • 0 • s)

Extra features: Introduction to Madama Butterfly; Ermonela Jaho and Antonio Pappano in rehearsal;

Cast gallery

Recorded live, March 30, 2017

Includes synopsis



This 2017 revival was the first time Antonio Pappano had conducted Moshe Leiser and Patrice Caurier's Royal Opera

production of *Madama Butterfly* since it was unveiled in 2003. The reason? Ermonela Jaho. The Albanian soprano is one of the great singing actresses of our time. Her Suor Angelica (in Puccini's *Il trittico*) ripped London audiences – and Jaho herself – to shreds. Her portrayal of the tragic Cio-Cio-San is no less moving.

Watching the performance on Blu-ray, one appreciates her incredibly subtle acting: the coy, wide-eyed teenager during her wedding to Marcelo Puente's feckless Pinkerton; the defiant look of absolute belief that he will return for her and their son; her very real tears during the Humming Chorus vigil. Here, one appreciates that in Act 2 – just three years later – Butterfly is still a teenager; her description of how the US judiciary throws out divorce cases is touchingly naive. Her suicide is devastating, flapping her 'wings' in her death throes set before a giant branch of weeping cherry blossoms, and had me in pieces, both in the house and here on screen. Jaho's vocal performance is touching. Hers is not a sumptuous soprano, glossing Puccini's rich lyric lines, but the colours she brings to her portrayal are astonishing, scaling 'Un bel dì' down to the merest thread.

Jaho is well supported by Elizabeth DeShong's feisty, sympathetic Suzuki. Their Flower Duet is quite beautifully sung. The rest of the cast is mostly very fine: a reliable, if vocally dry, Sharpless from Scott Hendricks; Carlo Bosi's oily Goro; Yuriy Yurchuk's towering Yamadori. I wish I liked Puente's Pinkerton more. His dashing looks suit the part but his tenor has a distracting wobble under pressure which can sound uncomfortably strangled in higher passages. Pappano – arguably today's greatest Puccinian conductor – draws ardent playing from

the ROH Orchestra, superbly detailed in its commentaries.

Leiser and Caurier's gimmick-free production is well known, both directors returning for this revival. Some critics find it a bit kitsch, but it works for me. Local colour is glimpsed through the winding paper windows of their spartan set – candyfloss pink blossoms, Nagasaki Harbour – the backdrop falling away dramatically for the furious entrance of the Bonze, denouncing Cio-Cio-San for abandoning her religion to adopt Christianity. The production's simplicity allows one to focus on the central performances and, with a Butterfly as heartbreaking as Ermonela Jaho's, it serves its purpose handsomely. **Mark Pullinger**

Puccini

Turandot

Rebeka Lokar *sop*..... Turandot
Jorge De León *ten*..... Calaf
Erika Grimaldi *sop*..... Liù
Marco Filippo Romano *bar*..... Ping
Luca Casalin *bar*..... Pang
Mikeldi Atxalandabaso *ten*..... Pong
In-Sung Sim *bass*..... Timur
Antonello Ceron *bar*..... Emperor Altoum
Roberto Abbondanza *bar*..... Mandarin
Joshua Sanders *ten*..... Prince of Persia
Chorus and Orchestra of the Teatro Regio, Turin / Gianandrea Nosedà

Stage director Stefano Poda

Video director Tiziano Mancini

C Major Entertainment (DVD) 748108;
 (Blu-ray) 748204 (115' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live, January 14, 18 & 20, 2018

Includes synopsis



Turandot's riddles are getting no easier to decipher in the 21st century. Now it's not

enough to see Puccini's last, unfinished opera as an exotic parable; not with its problematic depiction of a barbaric Orient and a frigid but bloodthirsty heroine. Franco Alfano's tacked-on completion only makes things worse, with its happy-ever-after ending packaging everything up like a shop assistant at Hamleys.

Here comes another attempt to find a new way in. Stefano Poda worked hard for his production for the Teatro Regio Torino, which had its premiere in January 2018: he did the direction, the sets, the costumes, choreography and lighting. Possibly he did the backstage catering, too, although the conducting was left to

the former music director Gianandrea Nosedà. The result is eye-catching if frustrating.

Ancient Peking is now a glass'n'perspex box, peopled by nubile men and women wearing thongs and nothing else. The nudity is less about titillation than about Poda's obsession with the body and death. These are preoccupations in the text, too, where even the moon is a 'severed head' and Turandot's subjects are reduced to meat for the executioner's blade. Indeed, the dancers, whose muscular choreography is rather mesmeric, are marked with red incisions across their torsos, presumably for ease of carving them up later. Act 2 begins with Ping, Pong and Pang bandaging up corpses as if they had just finished the autopsies. When Jorge de León's Calaf correctly answers 'blood' to Turandot's second riddle, a flayed, writhing man emerges from behind a screen.

And Turandot? 'She doesn't exist – only the void exists', says Ping, and this is another way into Poda's thinking. His Turandot is accompanied by women wearing identical white outfits and blonde wigs, who lip-sync to Lokar's words. She's allowed no personality of her own; but given that Poda and Nosedà have opted to finish the opera where Puccini did – the death of Liù – that adds up: Turandot fades away, and it's Calaf and a still-living Liù who face an uncertain future.

The show forges its own hallucinatory logic and looks stylish, but as with so many productions where body-beautiful dancers dominate in revealing costumes under elaborate lighting, it sometimes feels as if the singers themselves are inconvenient bit-parts. That's especially the case during a clunky riddle scene, during which Calaf perches on a chaise longue in a booth on the side of the stage while Turandot and her clones twitch around on the other side of a wall. He is the least comfortable person on stage, sometimes literally walking around in circles as the set revolves. In an opera that can seem like a passionless pageant, there is not that much more humanity here.

Nosedà will be missed at Turin, as this punchy and incisive performance reveals. Overall, speeds are brisk but there is plenty of atmospheric detail: the sinister tap of *col legno* strings, the jittery woodwind and skittering percussion. Erika Grimaldi's Liù is really the true heroine here, given the production's skewed emphasis: her soprano can take on a hard edge but she caps 'Signore, ascolta!' with a melting *pianissimo* and her arioso 'Tanto amore, segreto e inconfessato' is ardently done. Still, it's a pity that the Slovenian soprano Rebeka

Lokar gets so little input into Turandot, as she attacks those murderous high notes in juicy and vibrant voice. De León blows hot and cold: moments of gutsy Puccini-singing alternate with some coarsening of tone and uncertainty of pitch. Marco Filippo Romano's Ping is in stronger voice than the other two henchmen, while In-Sung Sim's Timur grizzles effectively.

Neil Fisher

Saint-Saëns

Ascanio

Jean-François Lapointe bar.....Benvenuto Cellini
Joé Bertili bass-bar.....Pagolo
Bernard Richter ten.....Ascanio
Ève-Maud Hubeaux mez.....Scozzzone
Jean Teitgen bass.....François I
Karina Gauvin sop.....Duchesse d'Étampes
Clémence Tilquin sop.....Colombe d'Estourville
Mohammed Haidar bar.....Beggar
Bastien Combe bar.....D'Estourville
Maxence Billiemaz ten.....D'Orbec
Raphaël Hardmeyer bass-bar.....Charles Quint
Olivia Doutney sop.....An Ursuline
Chorus of the Grand Théâtre, Geneva; Chorus and Orchestra of the Geneva University of Music / Guillaume Tourniaire

B Records ® ③ LBM013 (3h 10' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Grand Théâtre, Geneva, November 24 & 26, 2017

Includes synopsis, libretto and translation



Like so many works written for the Paris Opéra, where it was first performed in 1890, *Ascanio* never reached the stage in the form its composer intended. Shortly after completing the score in 1888, Saint-Saëns suffered a severe breakdown following the death of his mother, and eventually entrusted preparations for the premiere to his librettist Louis Gallet and the composer Ernest Guiraud. Exactly who decided on changes is unclear; but by the time Saint-Saëns heard the work late in its opening run, the score had been cut to bits, with two crucial scenes drastically telescoped into one. This effective abridgement formed the basis of its subsequent revivals and the opera was only heard complete last November, when Guillaume Tourniaire used Saint-Saëns's autograph score for the series of concert performances in Geneva that form the basis of this outstanding recording.

Gallet's source was Paul Meurice's 1852 play *Benvenuto Cellini*. Saint-Saëns adopted the title *Ascanio* in deference to Berlioz, though Cellini is very much the central character, and the opera, set during his 1540

Paris sojourn as goldsmith to François I, deals with his attempts to rescue Ascanio, his favourite pupil, from the clutches of François's mistress, the Duchesse d'Étampes, a lethal femme fatale who takes lovers behind the king's back then murders them to forestall accusations of infidelity. Ascanio and Cellini, however, are also rivals for the affections of the virginal if far from naive Colombe d'Estourville, infuriating not only the Duchesse but also Cellini's possessive model Scozzzone, who eventually becomes the tragic casualty of the Duchesse's scheming.

The score is magnificent, if uneven. The dramaturgy wobbles in places, notably in Act 2, where Saint-Saëns's need to give four of his protagonists their principal arias in succession holds up the action. The big public scenes are comparable in their grandeur to the finale of the *Organ* Symphony and every bit as thrilling. Colombe and Ascanio's duets are notably beautiful, and there's a marvellous scene in Act 3 when François and the Emperor Charles V, visiting Paris en route to Flanders, vie with each other to be Cellini's principal patron. Deeming it Wagnerian, Saint-Saëns's contemporaries compared it with *Meistersinger*, not entirely without reason. Debussy, meanwhile, must have been familiar with it: the similarities between Colombe's unaccompanied 'Mon coeur est sous la pierre' and Mélisande's 'Mes longs cheveux descendent' are too close to be coincidental.

The recording, meanwhile, is tremendous in the way it captures the excitement felt by singers, players and audience in the rediscovery of a significant work by a composer whose output is still in a process of re-evaluation. Tourniaire conducts with terrific élan and commitment, while his orchestra, a formidable student ensemble from Geneva's Haute École de Musique, play as if their lives depend on it. The choral singing is spine-tinglingly good, the soloists consistently superb. Jean-François Lapointe makes a tireless Cellini, charismatic, witty and astute, yet tellingly hampered by failures of emotional understanding when confronted with Ève-Maud Hubeaux's volatile yet adoring Scozzzone. Bernard Richter's Ascanio and Clémence Tilquin's Colombe sound tender and sexy together. Karina Gauvin's Duchesse dispenses scorn and seduction in equal measure, showering Lapointe and Richter with invective and twisting Jean Teitgen's sensualist François round her little finger with caressingly beautiful phrases. I admit to being swept away by the whole thing. It's a major achievement and highly recommended. **Tim Ashley**

Verdi

Giovanna d'Arco

Francesco Meli *ten*..... Carlo VII
 Carlos Álvarez *bar*..... Giacomo
 Anna Netrebko *sop*..... Giovanna
 Michele Mauro *ten*..... Delil
 Dmitry Beloselskiy *bass*..... Talbot
 Chorus and Orchestra of La Scala, Milan /
 Riccardo Chailly

Stage directors Moshe Leiser and Patrice Caurier

Video director Patrizia Carmine

Decca (F) DVD 074 3967DH; (F) Blu-ray 074 3968DH
 (136' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 &
 LPCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live, December 23, 2015

Includes synopsis

Verdi

Giovanna d'Arco

Luciano Ganci *ten*..... Carlo VII
 Vittorio Vitelli *bar*..... Giacomo
 Vittoria Yeo *sop*..... Giovanna
 Gabriele Mangione *ten*..... Delil
 Luciano Leoni *bass*..... Talbot
 Chorus of the Teatro Regio, Parma;
 I Virtuosi Italiani / Ramón Tebar

Stage directors Saskia Boddeke

and Peter Greenaway

Video director Saskia Boddeke

C Major Entertainment (F) DVD 745608;

(F) Blu-ray 745704 (127' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.0 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Teatro Farnese, Parma,
 October 2-20, 2016

Includes synopsis



Giovanna d'Arco stems from Verdi's 'galley years'. Composed for La Scala in 1845, it's full of great melodies even if it doesn't hit the same dramatic heights as *Nabucco* or

Macbeth, largely due to Temistocle Solera's weak libretto, diluting Schiller's drama *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* down to Giovanna's love for the Dauphin Carlo and her denunciation as a witch by her father, Giacomo. As in Schiller, Giovanna isn't burnt at the stake but perishes on the battlefield, having saved the king's life. The opera isn't performed much – I recall Philip Prowse's vivid, stylised production for the Royal Opera in 1996 – but, almost simultaneously, here come two stagings from Italy: La Scala, where the opera was premiered, and Parma, home to the Verdi Festival – two houses whose unforgiving *loggionisti* guard Verdi's heritage jealously.

Moshe Leiser and Patrice Caurier's production was the 2015-16 season-opener at La Scala. They depict the opera as a 19th-century girl's delirious hallucinations, watched over by her concerned father. The chorus appear without, peering into her room, while busy videography is displayed in the panels above including, at one point, what looks like a weeping Verdi. Carlo VII enters her dream clad in gold from head to toe, including a gleaming spray-tan giving him a comic, rather than regal, appearance, like *Star Wars*' C-3PO making his operatic debut. Giovanna dons the king's armour and brandishes his sword as she leads the French on to the battlefield – plenty of slo-mo action here – and the cross she hugs is inverted to become the stake to which she is strapped. The decisive battle takes place in Giovanna's head, Giacomo narrating events. Reims Cathedral rises magnificently through her bedroom, as does Carlo (on a golden horse). Video imagery suggests that Giovanna is erotically drawn to Carlo, and when they grapple on her bed, they are engulfed by a swarm of red devils. Winged angels appear at her death. It's as camp as a row of tents, but visually striking all the same.

The title-role was written for Erminia Frezzolini, renowned for her beauty of tone

and upper-register agility. Verdian *spinto* greats such as Renata Tebaldi and Montserrat Caballé tackled it on disc, as has Anna Netrebko, who first sang it at the Salzburg Festival (DG, 9/14). Here at La Scala, Netrebko is in magnificent voice, especially her strikingly rich lower register, even if her Act 1 cabaletta is a little squally. She soars in the Act 2 finale, while her *preghiera* is beautifully shaped. Netrebko is becoming one of the great Verdi sopranos of our day.

As Carlo, Francesco Meli sings a good deal more sensitively than other recent outings (he can be a bit of a can-belter) and Carlos Álvarez is in terrific voice as Giovanna's father, Giacomo. Riccardo Chailly is alert to the drama in the score, leading a vivid orchestral performance.

Up against the Scala forces, Parma struggles but offers a stronger cast than the opera's previous DVD incarnation (also from Parma) in C Major's 'Tutto Verdi' bicentenary release in 2013, which suffered a shrill soprano, a poor tenor and a gruff Renato Bruson, sadly well past his sell-by date as Giacomo. Parma's new production from 2016 comes from the husband-and-wife team of Peter Greenaway and Saskia Boddeke, staged in the 17th-century Baroque Teatro Farnese. It's an unusual space – U-shaped – with no pit. This leads to a tiny stage for the principals, while the chorus is relegated to serried ranks wrapped around stage and orchestra.

There are some striking background images beamed on to the theatre's archways, including iconography of Renaissance Madonnas and, later, modern-day refugee mothers carrying their children. An animated bloodied crown hovers over the stage at times. A cartoon of a coyly blinking girl is less effective, looking like a Japanese anime, and the meaning behind a battlefield of scissors escaped me.

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Another drawback is that Vittoria Yeo's Giovanna is accompanied by a pair of distracting dancer doubles, often relegating the Korean soprano to the role of observer. I've been impressed by Yeo recently in Venice and Florence; she's a plucky Giovanna, if without Netrebko's vocal glamour, a touch sour on occasion. Luciano Ganci forces quite a lot as Carlo but it's often an attractive voice, and solid baritone Vittorio Vitelli does well as Giacomo, confined to the rear steps for his big aria while Greenaway and Boddeke have Giovanna's doubles faffing about amid a swirl of video butterflies. No competition for La Scala. **Mark Pullinger**

Selected comparison:

Bartoletti (1/14) (CMAf) **DVD** 721208, 725808 or 721808;
Blu-ray 721304 or 725904

Vinci/Handel

Didone abbandonata

Robin Johannsen *sop* Didone
Olivia Vermeulen *mez* Enea
Antonio Giovannini *counterten* Iarba
Julia Böhme *contr* Selene
Namwon Huh *ten* Araspe
Polina Artsis *mez* Osmida
Lautten Compagny / Wolfgang Katschner
Deutsche Harmonia Mundi (F) (2) 88985 41508-2
(157' • DDD)

Includes synopsis, libretto and translation



'GF Händel' proclaims the CD cover, appending 'Leonardo Vinci' in

smaller type below. Shrewd marketing, perhaps, but a touch disingenuous. In fact there's barely a note of Handel on offer. What we get is the Italian composer's setting of Metastasio's *Didone abbandonata* as performed by Handel in his hectic 1737 Covent Garden season. In Rome in 1726 Vinci had fielded an all-male cast. Handel, who evidently admired the Italian (and was happy to filch the odd idea from him), naturally adapted the opera to his London ensemble. Prima donna Anna Strada del Pò took the part of Dido, while the role of the Moorish King Iarbas had to be beefed up for the star castrato Domenico Annibali. Using a score lent to him by his friend and future librettist Charles Jennens, Handel set to work cutting, tweaking and transposing, and interpolating nine arias by Hasse, Vivaldi, the obscure Geminiano Giacomelli and Vinci himself. After just four performances the resultant *pasticcio* disappeared from view. 'Very heavy' was the verdict of Handel's supporter Lord Shaftesbury.

'Too little variety' was my own final impression of *Didone*, though there are musical beauties en route. Vinci was the pioneer of the new Neapolitan style that staked all on simplicity, clarity and surface elegance. Counterpoint is virtually non-existent. Much of Vinci's – and not only Vinci's – invention, however agreeable, seems too mellifluously bland for the dramatic situation, as one ambling or jaunty major-key aria follows another. The minor is an endangered mode. Yet at moments music and drama do mesh effectively: in Dido's aptly regal 'Son regina' (which brought the house down in the original Rome production) and her plangent 'Se vuoi ch'io mora', the one number extensively reworked by Handel; or in Aeneas's swaggering 'A trionfar', imported from a Hasse opera. Finest of all is the opera's closing scene, a series of fragmentary accompanied recitatives for Dido broken by a splenetic outburst from the villainous Iarbas.

Based on a staged production in Schwetzingen, this new studio recording should satisfy anyone who fancies investigating an offbeat slice of 18th-century operatic history. The young cast all have the requisite fluent coloratura technique and dramatise as vividly as their music allows. The silvery-toned Robin Johannsen, as a Dido by turns touching and commanding, contrasts just sufficiently with Olivia Vermeulen's warmer mezzo as Aeneas. Vermeulen's confident negotiation of Hasse's vertiginous leaps and plunges makes 'A trionfar' a highlight of the whole performance. The other singers are all well cast, though Antonio Giovanni's Iarbas can sound merely petulant when he should be a force to reckon with – a familiar problem with countertenors *in extremis*. All the while Wolfgang Katschner directs his Berlin-based Lautten Compagny with spirit and affection, ever sensitive to his singers. Documentation, too, is first-rate, with libretto in Italian, English and German, and several informative, properly translated essays. Just don't expect any Handel here. **Richard Wigmore**

Vivaldi

Orlando furioso (1727 version, RV728)

Sonia Prina *contr* Orlando
Michela Antenucci *sop* Angelica
Lucia Cirillo *mez* Alcina
Loriana Castellano *mez* Bradamante
Konstantin Derri *counterten* Medoro
Luigi Schifano *counterten* Ruggiero
Riccardo Novaro *bar* Astolfo
I Barocchisti / Diego Fasolis

Stage director **Fabio Ceresa**

Video director **Matteo Ricchetti**

Dynamic (F) (2) **DVD** 37803; (F) **Blu-ray** 57803

(161' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1, DD5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Palazzo Ducale, Martina Franca, Italy, 2017



If you like your Baroque opera understated or postmodern (or uncut) then Fabio Ceresa's *Orlando furioso* is not

for you. Taking Vivaldi's opera absolutely at face value, the director delivers a production that's a gorgeous sprawl of period sensation and spectacle, high on camp and low on concept.

Filmed in summer 2017 at the Festival della Valle d'Itria in Martina Franca, this performance (trimmed down to a tidy two hours 45 minutes) plays out against the handsome facade of the town's Palazzo Ducale – a space that offers plenty of room for the rampant imaginations of designers Massimo Checchetto and Giuseppe Palella to expand into. A subsequent run at La Fenice's tiny Malibran Theatre reportedly confined and corralled the visuals, losing the excess that is absolutely the heart of this production.

The striking stage pictures come thick and fast, from the opening tableau of Alcina, framed like Botticelli's Venus in a giant gilded scallop shell and surrounded by exotic attendants – all feathered headdresses and strategically placed chiffon – to Medoro's arrival on the enchanted island, a flurry of silk seas and an evocatively storm-tossed boat. This, though, is later revealed as just a warm-up for Ruggiero's entrance astride a giant white eagle. Oversize shadow puppets create the shades of hell and the Pythonesque giant from which Orlando must seize Merlin's ashes.

If the cast don't quite equal the visuals for sensation, there's still plenty to enjoy. Mezzo Lucia Cirillo is a suitably bewitching Alcina, all hot eyes and cool coloratura, suddenly ferocious in her final 'Anderò, chiamerò dal profondo'. Luigi Schifano's Ruggiero is the pick of the countertenors – tone focused but never pushed, his 'Sol da te mio dolce amore' a dreamy vocal dance with obbligato flute – while Konstantin Derri is a tidy, prettily sung Medoro. In this sea of alto voices Loriana Castellano's Bradamante also stands out, her delivery crisp, her tone pleasantly grainy and full of character.

What to say of Sonia Prina's Orlando? Although still a strong stage presence, Prina's voice is now a caricature of what it once was. Her coloratura suffers from

extreme vowel modification, a lack of legato and aspirated consonants ('Nel profondo cieco mondo' is a particularly extreme example), all of which makes for a wild and over-exaggerated performance. She fares better in the mad scene, where her particular vocal tics serve dramatic effect, but this is still an awkward and unsatisfying performance.

Diego Fasolis and I Barocchisti provide efficient accompaniment, greatly enhanced by the rhetorical flair and wit of Fasolis's own continuo-playing. **Alexandra Coghlan**

'Confidence'

Bizet La jolie fille de Perth – Partout des cris de joie ... À la voix d'un amant fidèle^a **Chabrier** Habanera **Delibes** Jean de Nivelle – J'ai vu la bannière de France!^a **Lakmé** – Prendre le dessin d'un bijou ... Fantaisie aux divins mensonges^a **Duparc** Aux étoiles^a **Godard** Jocelyn – Cachés dans cet asile^a **Gounod** Cinq-Mars – À vous, ma mère ... Ô chère et vivante image^a **Holmès** Ludus pro patria – La nuit et l'amour **Joncières** Le Chevalier Jean – Parlons de moi, le voulez-vous? ... Oui j'aime, hélas!^a **Lehár** Le pays du sourire – Je t'ai donné mon cœur^a. Le veuve joyeuse – Viens dans ce joli pavillon^a **Messenger** Fortunio – J'aimais la vieille maison grise^a **Thomas Mignon** – Elle ne croyait pas, dans sa candeur naïve^a **Trenet** Vous, qui passez sans me voir (arr Lavandier)^a

^aJulien Behr ten

Orchestra of Opéra de Lyon / Pierre Bleuse
Alpha Ⓢ ALPHA401 (66' • DDD • T/t)



For his first solo album, Julien Behr explores repertory associated with a

voice type known in 19th-century France as the *ténor de demi-caractère*. This was not, it must be said, a singer who performed what we would now call 'character roles' but a lyric tenor, capable of refinement as well as power, usually heard in *opéras comiques*, in contrast to the bigger, more heroic voice required for post-Meyerbeerian *grand opéra*.

Gounod's Roméo and Des Grieux in Massenet's *Manon* are among the best-known roles written for such a voice, though Behr casts his net wider to encompass both the relatively familiar (Gérald in Delibes's *Lakmé*, Wilhelm in Thomas's *Mignon*) and the little known (the arias by Messenger and Joncières). After the turn of the 20th century, the *ténor de demi-caractère* would also have been expected to tackle leading roles in popular Viennese operettas, and Behr accordingly includes arias by Lehár, which he sings in French. The disc is dedicated, meanwhile, to his late grandparents, in whose memory

he adds Charles Trenet's 'Vous, qui passez sans me voir,' which was his grandfather's favourite song.

He has an attractive voice, with a touch of metal in the sound under pressure, an easy ring at the top and a beguiling warmth of tone when singing softly. Many of the arias are reflective and deal with memory, nostalgia and regret, which runs the risk of emotional sameness. Behr's characterisations are sharply differentiated, however, and Messenger's Fortunio, dreaming of the house where he grew up, is carefully contrasted with both Delibes's Jean de Nivelle, the military man reflecting on his childhood in a once unspoilt France now ravaged by conflict, and Joncières's Chevalier Jean, another soldier, longing to be reunited with the woman he loved in peacetime.

He's good in Lehár, too. 'Je t'ai donné mon cœur' ('Dein ist mein ganzes Herz') is very ardent, if fractionally slow, and he sounds really seductive singing 'Viens dans ce joli pavillon' ('Komm in den kleinen Pavillon') from *La veuve joyeuse*. 'Vous, qui passez', meanwhile, has bags of charm, the mix of wit and regret deftly caught. The arrangement, by Arthur Lavandier, is on the brash side but allows the Lyon Opéra Orchestra under Pierre Bleuse to show off their credentials as an authentic-sounding big-band. Elsewhere, their playing is elegant and refined, with some finely shaped woodwind solos and a beautiful sheen on the strings. **Tim Ashley**

'Contrabandista'

García Florestan, ou Le conseil des dix – Ô ciel! de ma juste furie comment réprimer le transport?. El gitano por amor – Cara gitana del alma mia. La mort du Tasse – Vous dont l'image toujours chère. El poeta calculista – Formaré mi plan con cuidado: Yo que soy contrabandista **Rossini** Armida – Amore ... (possente nome!)^a. Il barbiere di Siviglia – Cessa di più resistere. La Cenerentola – Sì, ritrovarla io giuro. Ricciardo e Zoraide – S'ella mi è ognor fedele ... Qual sarà mai la gioia **Zingarelli** Là dai regni dell'ombra, e di morte **Javier Camarena** ten ^a**Cecilia Bartoli** mez **Les Musiciens du Prince, Monaco / Gianluca Capuano**
Decca Mentored by Bartoli Ⓢ 483 3958DH
(71' • DDD • T/t)



Things bode well when you shout 'Bravo!' at the hi-fi speakers at the end of the first track. Javier Camarena has already sung at many of the world's great opera houses, so his vocal qualities are pretty widely known, but this new disc – under Decca's new 'Mentored by Bartoli' stamp –

should help propel the Mexican tenor to even greater heights.

The album certainly shares the traits of Cecilia Bartoli's discography. Served up in a beautifully presented hardback book, it focuses on the life and music of the Spanish tenor Manuel García, who lived an eventful life. Markus Wyler's entertaining notes of the rags-to-riches cobbler's son are packed with incident, including his escapades in Mexico. García created roles such as Almaviva in Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. He was a noted composer of light operas and was also the father of Maria Malibran – subject of Bartoli scholarship on a previous disc – and Pauline Viardot.

Camarena's disc is a delicious juxtaposition of García's Rossini roles, Capulet's aria from Niccolò Zingarelli's *Romeo e Giulietta* and a selection of García's own works, some in French, some in Spanish, such as 'Yo que soy contrabandista' from *El poeta calculista* which gives the disc its title – an aria that became extremely popular when both of García's daughters used to interpolate it into the singing lesson scene of *Barbiere*! Possessor of a fiery temperament, García seems to have had a wide vocal range, occasionally singing the title-role in *Don Giovanni*, the Count in *Figaro* and, in *Così fan tutte*, alternating between Ferrando and Guglielmo as required. The booklet note writer, however, seems to think we get to hear *Don Giovanni*'s serenade on the disc. We don't.

García was criticised for over-ornamentation – something that could never be levelled at Camarena, who is a model of good taste, apart from the occasional aspirate. The amiable Mexican throws himself into this repertoire with abandon, greedily lapping up the florid coloratura excesses with ease. He has a wonderfully flexible voice without any hint of nasality or the slightly metallic top of someone like Juan Diego Flórez, the only other tenor who could currently tackle this sort of stuff with such easy elegance.

From *Barbiere*, Camarena sings a terrific 'Cessa di più resistere' – familiar from its guise as the showstopping finale to *La Cenerentola* – which is jaw-dropping in its virtuosity. Don Ramiro's 'Sì, ritrovarla io giuro' dazzles. García was also a noted Otello, often performing opposite his daughter, Maria, as Desdemona, so it's a shame there is no memento here (Bartoli has essayed Desdemona wonderfully). Instead, the Italian mezzo joins Camarena in a lengthy duet from *Armida*, voices entwined seamlessly.

The numbers from García's own works – three of them recorded for the first time – are carried off with a good deal of swagger,



Sumptuous staging: Vivaldi's *Orlando furioso* gets the full period treatment – see review on page 123

Camarena enthusiastically supported by Les Musiciens du Prince under Gianluca Capuano. An often thrilling disc, worthy of the Bartoli imprimatur. **Mark Pullinger**

'Miroir(s)'

Gounod Faust – Les grands seigneurs ... Ah! je ris de me voir si belle. Roméo et Juliette – Dieu! Quel frisson court dans mes veines? **Massenet** Hérodiade – Celui dont la parole efface toutes peines ... Il est doux, il est bon. Manon – Allons, il le faut! ... Adieu, notre petite table. Thaïs – Ah! je suis seule ... Dis-moi que je suis belle **Mozart** Le nozze di Figaro – Porgi, amor **Puccini** Manon Lescaut In quelle trine morbide **Rossini** Il barbiere di Siviglia – Una voce poco fa **Steibelt** Roméo et Juliette – Je vais donc usurper les droits de la nature **R Strauss** Salomé – Ah! Tu n'as pas voulu
Elsa Dreisig sop **Montpellier Occitanie National Orchestra / Michael Schönwandt**
Erato © 9029 56341-3 (70' • DDD)
Includes texts and translations



Now here's a striking debut. The young Franco-Danish soprano Elsa Dreisig consolidated her 2016 Operalia win by becoming a company member at the Berlin Staatsoper, where she has earned good reviews, particularly for her Violetta earlier this year and Micaëla last year in Aix.

For her first disc, she has boldly programmed pairs of arias showing operatic characters in 'mirror image' portrayals by different composers. Thus we get Rossini's spunky Rosina and Mozart's older, disillusioned Countess; alternative versions of the coquettish Manon Lescaut; Salome as portrayed by Massenet and Strauss; and Shakespeare's Juliet in a pair of premiere recordings – the original version of Gounod's classic and an earlier opera by Daniel Steibelt. Dreisig opens with a duo of French arias featuring mirrors: Marguerite's Jewel Song and Thaïs's Mirror Aria, 'Je suis seule'.

That's a pretty wide spectrum of characters on which to reflect, from the lighter coloratura repertoire to lyric Mozart, heavier Puccini and the heft to carve through Strauss's *Salome*. Can any one voice encompass all these vocal demands? The first thing one notices is that her French diction is excellent, really crisp, with nice guttural Rs for 'Roméo', and her soprano is dewy and light. Her characterisations are convincing. As Marguerite, she sounds wide-eyed and totally smitten with the casket of jewels she's been given. There is a touching fragility to her Massenet Manon.

Both her Juliets are excellent. Steibelt's *Roméo et Juliette* is from 1793 – the vocal style is similar to Cherubini – with plenty of *Sturm und Drang* fire in the heroine's

torment. The original version of Gounod's opera preceded 'Amour, ranime mon courage' with a brief *cantabile*, 'Viens! Ô liqueur mystérieuse', as Juliette steels herself to take Frère Laurent's draught. Dreisig turns this into a little tour de force, wonderfully supported by Schönwandt and his Montpellier orchestra.

Inevitably, her voice doesn't yet seem a perfect fit for some roles: Thaïs needs a bit more vocal weight and lyric cream, and her final note is an uncomfortable squeeze. In the Rossini, soprano Rosinas can often sound a bit shrewish, and here Dreisig's coloratura is a touch brittle at the top. Her Countess sounds young, but her Puccini Manon is good and she's a suitably dreamy Salomé in Massenet's 'Il est doux, il est bon' from *Hérodiade*.

But Dreisig saves the real surprise for the end: the blood-drenched final scene from Strauss's *Salome*. Or rather *Salomé*, for this is the alternative version Strauss made, revising the vocal lines to fit Oscar Wilde's original French text, which was used by Mary Garden. The vocal range is extremely wide and it requires a true singing actress but Dreisig makes a most convincing case, with plenty of silvery steel as the debased teenager. Schönwandt, who conducted a striking *Salome* for Chandos (3/99), is in his element. In time, it would be fascinating to hear Dreisig tackle the full role, for this portrait is full of promise. **Mark Pullinger**

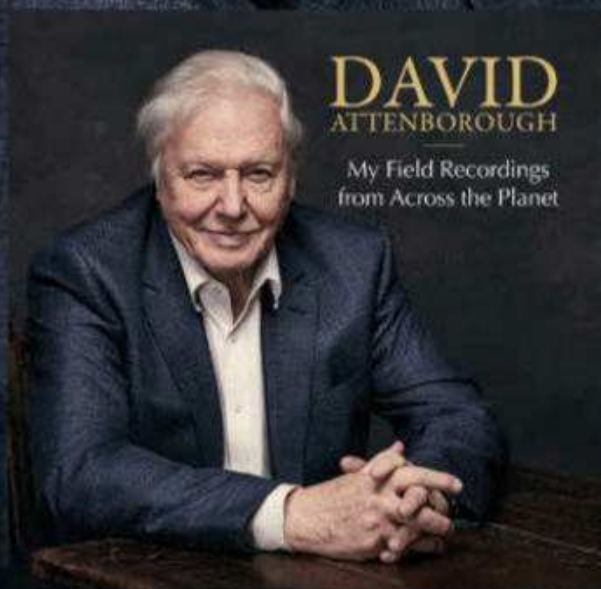
*“While I was theoretically looking for pythons,
in the evenings I would record different types of music...”*

David Attenborough reflects on his time filming *Zoo Quest* between 1954-1963

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THE WORLD MUSIC COLLECTOR

The Editors of Gramophone's sister music magazines, Jazzwise and Songlines, recommend some of their favourite recordings from the past month

Jazz

Brought to you by **jazzwise**

Charlie Haden and Brad Mehldau

Long Ago and Far Away
Impulse! © 6789500



In November 2007, Charlie Haden and Brad Mehldau played a church concert at Heidelberg's Enjoy Jazz festival, and this set of six classics is the understatedly action-packed result. Mehldau seems to be respectfully adjusting to Haden's seniority at first, in taking the opening 'Au Privave' at a very stately lope – but soon the pair are slyly tugging at the tune, with Haden adjusting his wide-spaced, throbbing tones to Mehldau's whimsical repeating figures bounced across the registers, bursts of swing, and crowded, onrushing passages. 'My Old Flame' is tenderly bluesy and ruminatively expanded in lyrical solos from both players, the 15-minute title-track is

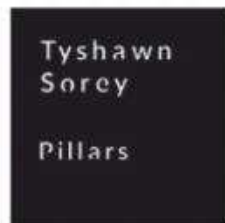
jaggedly jaunty and develops as an astonishing long series of cross-rhythmic Mehldau variations, 'My Love And I' is a heartfelt ballad that heads into chord-jangling outlands, 'Everything Happens To Me' confirms the deep affection of both these freethinkers for a straightforwardly tender tune. It's music of an unsurprisingly private intimacy, but it speaks volumes.

John Fordham

Tyshawn Sorey

Pillars

Firehouse 12 © FH12-01-02-028



Sorey's avowed interest in Zen Buddhism has surfaced on previous recordings such as *Koan* and here he takes the principle of meditation one step further, with each of three discs coming across

almost as grandiose, slow-moving flotillas where harmonies ripple tantalisingly out of silence, and a single timbre, above all Stephen Haynes' maudlin hark on the trumpet, becomes an episode in itself. Sorey's aim is tantamount to capturing motifs in mid-air, with an attendant ambience that is extremely understated. In a world where successions of notes and attention-seeking noise are prevalent in many genres of music this is a bold strategy fraught with risk. It takes several sittings to immerse oneself in such an environment devoid of clear, or at least conventional, signposts. The allusive can be a touch too elusive, yet the beauty by austerity, if not severity, is hard to dismiss when the piercing of brass or guitar cushioned by a distant voice or melodica has a deeply satisfying emotional tenor that is anything but overly familiar. Demanding, beguiling, rewarding. **Kevin Le Gendre**

World Music

Brought to you by **SONGLINES**

Baul Meets Saz

Namaz

Seyir Muzik Records © GN006



Some musical fusions languish in the superficial, achieving little more than a novel combination of disparate sounds, while others operate on a much deeper level. This debut by Baul Meets Saz – an ensemble formed around the core trio of vocalist Malabika Brahma, saz (lute) player Emre Gültekin, and percussionist/guitarist Sanjay Khyapa – sits firmly in the latter category.

The mood gradually shifts between solemn contemplation (as on the opening 'Hridaya') and ecstatic joy, exemplified by 'Jaat Gyalo', with Brahma's voice remaining a powerful and moving focus throughout. Each piece is allowed to evolve

organically, ebbing and flowing with a semi-improvisational quality. The absence of a clear bass instrument on *Namaz* creates a wonderful space at the heart of the recording, which only enhances the overall sense of depth. Additional tonal contrast is provided by the sparing presence of several guest musicians, who join the trio on duduk (Armenian oboe), doholla drum, saxophone and sarod and oud (lutes). **Charlie Cawood**

Talisk

Beyond

Talisk Records ©



Fresh from a well-deserved win of the 2018 BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards' Musician of the Year award for concertina player Mohsen Amini, Talisk release their second album. And what a cracker it is too.

There is a remarkably powerful sound from the trio, which includes Hayley Keenan on fiddle and Graham Armstrong on guitar. 'Montreal' is a foot-stamping, blistering opener whilst 'Cabot Trail' is a beautifully sweeping and pounding evocation of the North American landscape. 'Rations' is a sweaty duet between fiddle and concertina, with some tasty pounding guitar; while title-track 'Beyond' hints at rich promises still to come, via energetic and unexpected rhythms. *Talisk* also bring a remarkable guestlist on 'Farewell': Breabach, Skerryvore, Tide Lines and We Banjo 3 are among many others joining the band on vocals. There is a wide-eyed enthusiasm here for all things traditional and a burgeoning excitement at where the band is heading which is incredibly infectious and endearing. Fresh, invigorating, accomplished and playfully frisky: this is a wonderful release. **Billy Rough**

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REISSUES & ARCHIVE

Our monthly guide to the most exciting catalogue releases, historic issues and box-sets

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Claudio Abbado in Berlin

Andrew Farach-Colton considers the great Italian maestro's Berlin Philharmonic legacy

Claudio Abbado made his Berlin Philharmonic debut in December 1966 and his first recording with the orchestra just six months later – a dazzling coupling of Prokofiev's Third and Ravel's G major Piano Concertos with Martha Argerich that rightly takes its place in a curated *Gramophone* survey of the '250 Greatest Recordings of All Time' (6/10). It was the 34-year-old conductor's first recording for Deutsche Grammophon and inaugurated a lifelong relationship with the prestigious Yellow Label.

The 60 CDs in this box encompass nearly everything Abbado recorded with the Berliners for DG and Philips, and the majority are from live concerts. There are neither bonus material nor previously unreleased performances, most of what's here has never been deleted from the catalogue and a significant fraction is repertoire he'd previously recorded with other orchestras. In other words, don't expect any big surprises.

The discs are arranged alphabetically by composer but I listened chronologically in the hopes it might somehow prove instructive. Lo and behold, I found that the vast majority of Abbado's early Berlin recordings were devoted to Brahms. I'd also never noticed that his affectionate, generously phrased performance of the A major Serenade was taped mere months after the sessions with Argerich. His 1970 account of the Second Symphony was entirely new to me. It's so leisurely and Apollonian that, if auditioning blind, I doubt I'd have any clue Abbado was conducting. (I might have guessed Carlo Maria Giulini, honestly.)

There's an 11-year gap separating that reading of Brahms's D major Symphony from the D major Serenade, Abbado's fourth disc from Berlin, and the temporal distance seems audible. Where the symphony was relaxed almost to the

point of languor, the serenade is alert, finely coloured and full of character. Abbado went on to re-record the Second Symphony in 1988, this time with a suppler sense of pulse and a keener eye for expressive detail, and laid the cornerstone for an immensely satisfying survey of the composer's orchestral music that's a highlight of this collection. The Third Symphony followed in 1989 and the First the year after. In between, the orchestra voted unanimously for Abbado to succeed Herbert von Karajan as Chief Conductor. Listening to the symphonies in the order they were recorded, I think I discern a crescendo of confidence and exultancy. These are monumental readings, worlds away from the Meiningen-style svelteness currently in vogue, and the series is fittingly capped by an intensely lyrical Fourth.

The consistent naturalness one hears is born from conviction, not the lack of it

Abbado chose Mahler's First Symphony for the opening programme of his tenure as music director in December 1989, and although it conveys a real sense of occasion, I marginally prefer the bite and restless energy of his earlier Chicago version (DG, 3/82). Setting aside chronology for the moment, it should go without saying that Mahler looms large in this set – and there are some powerful performances. The Third, Fifth, Sixth (*Gramophone's* 2006 Recording of the Year) and an exceptionally vivid *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (with Anne Sofie von Otter and Thomas Quastoff) are wholly recommendable, despite oddly variable sound quality. The Seventh and Ninth are very good but not outstanding – his Chicago Seventh, on the other hand, sits alongside Bernstein (DG, 12/86) and

Tennstedt (BBC Legends, 12/07) in my top three. Alas, the ponderous Eighth is a real disappointment, particularly since it's Abbado's only recording of the work. The Fourth, from 2005, was his last recording with this orchestra for DG. I marginally prefer it to his Vienna account (DG, 6/78), as he now adds an extra dollop of bittersweet nostalgia, but Renée Fleming's inappropriately voluptuous singing is anything but angelic.

There are other disappointments, major and minor: overly reverential readings of the Mozart and Brahms Requiems, for example, a lacklustre Hindemith album, and several discs' worth of Wagner where Abbado sometimes sounds as if he's trying to demystify the music. Interestingly, I'm not sure Abbado was ever really at home in Richard Strauss's music, either. The *Four Last Songs*, recorded in 1998 with the fabulous Karita Mattila, are superficially quite beautiful but little more than that. And while there's no question that Abbado was a brilliant Verdi conductor – a sizzling album of overtures and preludes from 1996 was one of my happiest discoveries here – I continue to be unenthused by his punctilious *Falstaff*, the only complete opera in this box. Despite a terrific cast and crackerjack playing from the Berliners, it comes across more like a dress rehearsal than a performance.

One thing that struck me as I listened through this set is Abbado's attentive sensitivity to soloists – call it chemistry, if you like. It's evident when comparing his accompaniment for Alfred Brendel's passionate and aptly gritty 1986 studio performance of Brahms's D minor Piano Concerto with the lighter-textured and emotionally restrained live recording made 11 years later with Maurizio Pollini. There are three versions of Brahms's Violin Concerto. The first, a studio account from 1987 with Shlomo Mintz, is one of the few

discs here that's been nearly forgotten, and what a pity – it's warm-hearted, sweet-toned and affectingly vulnerable. Turn to a 1992 concert from Tokyo with Viktoria Mullova, and you're in another world: serious, sharply focused and intensely concentrated. Last but not least, Gil Shaham live at the Berlin Philharmonie in 2000, considerably more urgent than the others and with a heightened sense of the music's range of character. Abbado's widely acclaimed cycle of the five Beethoven piano concertos with Pollini is admirable for its chiselled definition and muscularity, and I might use similar descriptors for a marvellous 1993 coupling of Prokofiev's First and Third Piano Concertos with Evgeny Kissin. More impressive still is a 1994 performance of Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto with Argerich, so mercurial and incendiary it leaves me breathless every time. Somehow I missed a riveting, icy-hot reading of Rachmaninov's *Paganini* Rhapsody with Mikhail Pletnev from the 1997 New Year's Eve gala – another happy discovery.

Sadly, Abbado's keen interest in contemporary music and out-of-the-way repertoire is barely glimpsed here. I remember hearing his LSO album (RCA, 2/81) of some little-known Mussorgsky upon its initial release and being bowled over by the original version of *Night on the Bare Mountain*. Abbado revisited those same nuggets in Berlin in 1993, and the tone poem comes across even more savagely. I'm also particularly keen on a Janáček album bringing together the Sinfonietta and an unidiomatic but nevertheless effective orchestration of *The Diary of One Who Disappeared*; Philip Langridge sings magnificently and Abbado wrings every last drop of drama from this astonishing song-cycle. Speaking of Czech music, I was unexpectedly charmed by a sumptuous yet rhythmically vital 1997 performance of Dvořák's Ninth Symphony – and, yes, I know the *New World* is anything but out of the way. In terms of contemporary music, there's only a 44-minute disc of Stockhausen's *Gruppen* and a pair of absorbing Kurtág works – unless you're willing to stretch the term 'contemporary' to take in a dour account of Schoenberg's Piano Concerto with Pollini.

Brahms and Mahler loom large in this set, yet Beethoven is an equally pervasive presence. In addition to the piano concertos are two discs devoted largely to the incidental music for *Egmont*, *The Consecration of the House* and *Leonore Prohaska*, all in fine if unremarkable performances, although a swaggeringly assured account of the *Choral Fantasy* with



Claudio Abbado's 'complete' DG and Philips recordings with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra run to 60 CDs

Evgeny Kissin is extremely fine indeed. And then there's Abbado's traversal of the nine symphonies – or, rather, the second of two he made with the Berliners. The first was recorded in Berlin in 1999-2000 and released the following year (DG, 1/01). Abbado wasn't entirely satisfied, however, so DG put out a second edition using performances of all but the Ninth from concerts given at the Santa Cecilia hall in Rome in 2001; the original Berlin Ninth stayed. The second cycle holds up extremely well, balancing elements absorbed from period practice with Abbado's penchant for poise and architectural integrity. Visiting it again in this broader context, I'd say it's one of the most impressive achievements of Abbado's Berlin tenure.

Clearly, DG isn't being entirely accurate in labelling this box 'complete'. Why not include both Beethoven cycles? Comparing the two side by side might yield a better understanding of what Abbado was getting at. He is, after all, a somewhat elusive figure, artistically. I first heard him conduct on the radio in 1979 in a live broadcast of Mahler's Second with the Boston Symphony that shook me to my adolescent core. After that, I followed his career fairly closely, although my interest gradually waned in the '90s – the Berlin years – as I felt his music-making lose some of its vigour and exploratory verve. Wending my way through this box hasn't changed my mind, exactly, but it has given me pause.

It's true that a large handful of these recordings show Abbado's grip to be insufficiently tight. On the other hand, his interpretations rarely sound forced or fussed over, and that's a quality that should never be taken for granted. To that point, I was struck by Rob Cowan's comment in his review of the Brahms piano concertos (8/00) that 'it's easy to understand how Pollini's naturalness can be misunderstood as matter-of-factness'. Surely the same could be said of Abbado. Cavils aside, I'm certain the consistent naturalness one hears in this set – and, indeed, throughout the conductor's career *in toto* – is born from conviction, not the lack of it. **G**



THE RECORDING

**Claudio Abbado & Berliner Philharmoniker:
The Complete Recordings on Deutsche
Grammophon**

DG © (60 discs) 483 5183

Revisiting the master 150 years on ...

Richard Osborne has been listening to Rossini from Cecilia Bartoli and from Warner Classics

This music reflects my entire career and my growing up as an artist', writes **Cecilia Bartoli** in the preface to this 150th-anniversary edition of her complete Rossini recordings. Taken chronologically, the set does indeed offer a fascinating overview of the moveable feast that is Bartoli's art, from the debut recordings of 1988 to the memorable Zurich stagings of *Otello* and *Le Comte Ory* in 2011-12.

It was with music by Rossini that she auditioned, aged 20, for Decca's Christopher Raeburn in Milan in 1986; and it was with Rossini that she made her earliest international stage appearances in Pesaro and Schwetzingen in the summer of 1988. Her Lucilla in that Pesaro *La scala di seta* secured a parenthetical mention in *Opera* by the veteran Italian vocal critic Giorgio Gualerzi. ('A promising mezzo-soprano of lyrical brilliance but throaty technique.') But it was her Rosina in the Schwetzingen Festival restaging of a famous Michael Hampe production of *Il barbiere* that fixed her young reputation.



Cecilia Bartoli's voice was God-given and her training – by her mother, an ex-singer – remarkable

A live recording of that Pesaro *La scala di seta* appears in the new 50-CD Rossini Edition from Warner Classics, and in Decca's Bartoli box. The performance is an engaging one, though singers and orchestra are far too distantly recorded.

The DVD of the Schwetzingen *Il barbiere* still sounds and looks well, which is more than can be said of the

studio recording of *Il barbiere* which Decca made in Bologna later that year. Limpidly conducted by Giuseppe Patanè, and with Leo Nucci as a far from ideal Figaro, it was left to the 22-year-old Bartoli to carry the occasion. This she does, albeit with a certain amount of old-fashioned soprano ornamentation.

Rosina's 'Una voce poco fa' crops up several times during the set in accounts that are variously reckless and sublime. The voice was widely admired, a lustrous soprano, contralto-tinged as John Steane put it in 1989, though JBS was not alone in preferring a more closely bound, more legato way with some triplets, scales and runs.

The voice was God-given and her training – by her mother, an ex-singer – remarkable; but the earliest Decca recordings suggest that she was asked to record too much too soon. The first solo albums – 'Rossini Arias' and 'Rossini Songs' – introduced the voice but left no discernible interpretative footprint, such as Montserrat Caballé left with her 'Rossini Rarities' (RCA, 12/68 – nla) or Marilyn



Cecilia Bartoli as Desdemona with Javier Camarena as Rodrigo in Rossini's *Otello* in Moshe Leiser and Patrice Caurier's 2012 Zurich production

Horne with her superlative 1981 CBS disc of Rossini songs (included in the new Warner Edition), with its matchless account of the 1832 cantata for voice and piano *Giovanna d'Arco*. (The Bartoli box includes a blander account of the original, as well as a previously unpublished recording of the orchestral version which composer Salvatore Sciarrino created for Teresa Berganza in 1989.) Bartoli's way with Rossini songs is transformed later in the set when James Levine and Jean-Yves Thibaudet are her partners, wonderful pianists who help lift the musical characterisations to new levels.

Bartoli's first landmark recital, the Colbran-inspired 'Rossini Heroines' recorded in Venice's Teatro La Fenice in 1991, features in the superb Bartoli documentary, included in the new set, which director David Thomas made for LWT's *South Bank Show* on location in Venice, Rome and London. The film is a delight, not only for the colourful location shots, including a seat-belt free Cecilia powering her way through Rome's traffic in her coral red Fiat Cinquecento, but for the sequences devoted to her working (and lunching) with Christopher Raeburn, her Beechamesque record producer, and with her mother and coach, Silvana Bazzoni Bartoli.

The film also commissioned and drew on a recital Bartoli gave with the pianist György Fischer before an invited audience in London's Savoy Hotel. This is Bartoli at her early best, the singer's art wonderfully concentrated away from the harum-scarum of stage action.

On the evidence of the five filmed operas collected here, the success or otherwise of these has been more than usually dependent on the quality of the direction and the television filming. Her 1997 CD recording of *Il turco in Italia*, conducted by Riccardo Chailly, is one of the collection's happiest items, yet the later Zurich staging by Cesare Lievi and designer Tullio Pericoli is an abomination: a characterless design-led reinvention in which crude costuming, tactlessly filmed, makes Bartoli's Fiorilla look like Tracey Ullman's Angela Merkel. The unfilmed Leiser/Caurier Covent Garden production was far kinder.

By contrast, the 1995 DVD of *La Cenerentola*, conducted by Bruno Campanella, is a more musically sympathetic affair than the 1992 CD recording under Chailly. The film is very watchable, though there's a diva-like dimension to Bartoli's playing of Cenerentola that neither the television direction nor the production entirely hides.

It is not until we reach the superb stagings by Moshe Leiser and Patrice Caurier in Zurich in 2011-12 of *Otello* and *Le Comte Ory* – Rossini's wittiest and most stylish comedy, realised here in a vastly amusing pitch-perfect production updated to France in the 1950s – that we find Bartoli at her best as a stage performer. It helps enormously, of course, that film-maker Olivier Simonnet knows exactly when and when not to film a singer in close-up.



When it comes to the strangely mixed inheritance Warner Classics (founded 1991) has been able to draw on for its **Rossini Edition**,

it's perhaps best to cut to the chase and identify the finest items, not all of which are currently available or, if available, not as advantageously priced as in this 50-CD box retailing at (roughly) £80.

Three of the best of the 14 complete opera recordings come from EMI: early 1950s Glyndebourne recordings of *La Cenerentola* and *Le Comte Ory* under Vittorio Gui, and the still unsurpassed 1972 recording of *Guillaume Tell* conducted by Lamberto Gardelli. Two other successes – *L'italiana in Algeri* with Marilyn Horne and rather a good *Zelmira*, both conducted by Claudio Scimone – are taken from the Erato catalogue, which Warner Classics acquired in 1992.

Marc Minkowski's live 1996 Paris performance of the wonderful semi-serious one-acter *L'inganno felice* makes a welcome return, while Gabriele Ferro's fine 1978 West German Radio recording of *Tancredi*, featuring Fiorenza Cossotto and Lella Cuberli, makes what is in effect its long-awaited debut. (CBS had the rights but the set was not released in the UK.) Period instruments are used and the opera is played with the revised tragic ending that had come to light two years earlier.

The other complete opera recordings are less recommendable. Callas's 1954 *Il turco in Italia* uses an edition which omits the heroine's principal aria; Scimone's pre-emptive strike on *Ermione*, ahead of its 1987 stage revival, is an underwhelming affair; and the less said the better about the strange 1975 EMI lash-up that purports to be an Italian version of *Le Siège de Corinthe*. Beverley Sills features but is heard to better effect, if you don't mind a coloratura Rosina, in a 1975 EMI recording of *Il barbiere* made in, of all places, a London

church under the young James Levine. The set overall is a poor choice, much inferior to earlier EMI recordings under Galliera and Gui.

Here is not the place to go into the saga of the often badly made live Pesaro Festival recordings to which the Ricordi-owned Fonit-Cetra gave limited circulation in the 1990s. There is value in the CDs devoted to the historically important 1986 revival of the coloratura psychodrama *Bianca e Falliero* (starring Katia Ricciarelli and Horne); rather less appeal in a 1992 *Semiramide* featuring the high mezzo Iano Tamar in the title-role.

Non-operatic highlights, other than the superb ex-CBS Marilyn Horne recital already mentioned, include Antonio Pappano's fine 2010 recording of the *Stabat mater*, Joyce DiDonato's 'Colbran, The Muse', and the starrily cast 1992 New York Rossini bicentenary gala.

At a rough count, 27 of the 50 discs could be judged 'collectable'. But there is also a lot of dross here, indiscriminately bundled up by Warner's Parlophone team into a job-lot marked 'Rossini'. When a recording is not even authentic Rossini, or when the performance wrecks good music, as happens here with the engaging Neapolitan *Messa di Gloria*, it is in no one's interest to disinter it.

And there's a bigger problem. For though the accompanying booklet prints track-by-track synopses of the 14 operas, there are no texts or translations for anything else. There is also a complete absence of background information about the music, such as could have been provided by a new bespoke introduction to the edition. What, for example, is anyone to make of the CD given over to Rossini's incidental music to Sophocles's *Oedipus at Colonus* if denied both background and text? There's a lengthy analysis of the piece in my review of the original disc in May 1982 but who's going to track that down?

Such cheese-paring is self-defeating, particularly in the case of Rossini. The highways and byways of his art are rich in interest, some of it arcane, and on any journey of exploration it helps have a map and a well-chosen gazetteer to hand.

Decca's Bartoli edition, by contrast, reprints original background essays, with complete texts and translations available online. **G**

► See also Richard Osborne's cover feature on Rossini, 150 years after the composer's death, on page 14

THE RECORDINGS

Cecilia Bartoli - Rossini Edition

Decca © 15 + 6 DVD 483 3936

Rossini Edition Various artists

Warner Classics © (50 discs) 9029 56111-5

BOX-SET *Round-up*

Rob Cowan offers a personal round-up of some worthwhile CD bargains



Having spent the year celebrating **Leonard Bernstein's** centenary, it seems appropriate to commence this last of my monthly box-set surveys for 2018 by marking the release of two further commemorative collections. The first, and more impressive of the two, purports to be 'His Greatest [Sony] Recordings', which is true, though being limited to 16 CDs we're not talking about all his great recordings, not by a mile. The 1961 New York Mahler Third, yes, absolutely, one of the finest Mahler sound documents of the last century, a truly fabulous performance charged with atmosphere. The 1958 *Rite of Spring* is also special, surely the best we have from Bernstein (at least in stereo sound), as is a superb *Eroica* and a cracking disc of Beethoven overtures, with a *Consecration of the House* that vies with Szell's or Toscanini's for impact. Whether I would have placed Grofé's *Grand Canyon Suite* on quite the same exalted level, good though it is, is open to question; but key Copland, Gershwin and music by Bernstein himself – the first commercial recordings of the *Serenade* (with Isaac Stern) and the *Second Symphony* (with Lukas Foss) – are worthy of note though, speaking personally, in neither case would I profess a preference for those recordings over their stereo Sony successors. Beethoven concertos with Rudolf Serkin and Mozart concertos where Bernstein himself is the soloist leave their mark and there are remarkable performances of Nielsen's Third and Fifth Symphonies.

The other Bernstein box (**An American in Paris**) chronicles his work from the 1970s with the Orchestre de Paris, supplementing commercial recordings

with live performances, mostly never previously available on CD, and some rehearsal sequences. Bernstein rehearsing Ravel's *Alborada del gracioso* has a good deal more bite and gusto than the resultant performance, while in both *La valse* and *Boléro* Bernstein ratchets the tension up to fever pitch, cueing a volley of appreciative screams from the audience. Marilyn Horne is seductive in *Shéhérazade*, while Bernstein's performance of the G major Piano Concerto isn't exactly the last word in tidiness. The French readings of *On the Waterfront* and the *West Side Story* dances have a brave stab at authenticity without quite achieving it and there are the commercial recordings: a hollow-sounding *Symphonie fantastique*, a superior *Harold in Italy*, a vivid Milhaud programme, Rachmaninov's Third Concerto with Alexis Weissenberg, where the closely balanced, clattery piano contrasts alarmingly with Bernstein's overly romantic conducting, and accounts of the Schumann Cello Concerto and Bloch's *Schelomo* with Rostropovich, painted in dark, thick brush strokes.

Another anniversary collection marks the 80th birthday, in 2016, of the **Israel Philharmonic**, originally the Palestine Orchestra. Helicon have also released a compelling Mahler Ninth under Bernstein from 1985 but a sonically rather more variable 12-CD anniversary set also features a handful of Bernstein items (another fine *Consecration of the House* among them). However, the set's undoubted highlight is a remarkable 1964 programme under Pierre Monteux which includes a bracing account of Elgar's *Enigma* Variations, a finely judged

Concerto with Isaac Stern, and Schumann's Second and Third Symphonies are vigorously conducted by Paul Paray (1976, 1971). Various works by Israeli composers extend our knowledge of the nation's concert repertoire and the roll call of conductors also includes Zubin Mehta (who is very generously represented), Sergiu Celibidache (Mozart's Clarinet Concerto with soloist Yona Ettlinger), Kurt Masur, Paul Kletzki (Mahler's Second), Kirill Kondrashin (Shostakovich's Sixth), Antal Dorati and Rafael Kubelík. Also included is a bonus CD where Daniel Barenboim plays and directs concertos by Beethoven and Mozart. Helicon additionally provides a booklet packed with rare and historically significant photographs, including a facsimile of the note that an appreciative Johannes Brahms wrote to the boy violinist Bronisław Huberman (who was eventually to become the orchestra's co-founder).

Would that any of the above had recorded the symphonies of Alexander Glazunov, or even a couple of them. Still, we do have cycles under Fedoseyev, Svetlanov and Rozhdestvensky, as well as a treasurable handful of performances (in scrawny sound) by Nikolai Golovanov and, most recently, the augmented cycle by **José Serebrier** with the Royal Scottish National and Russian National Orchestras. Serebrier masters the range of Glazunov's lyrical style, from the blithe opening of the Third Symphony (with audible hints of Elgar) and its yearning *Andante* to the deeply romantic Fifth and the more questioning pages of the far darker Eighth. True, as symphonic structures go, there are flaws, even the odd crack, but if viewed as ballet music shoehorned into symphonic form,

Beethoven Fourth (always a Monteux speciality) and an equally engaging performance of the *Daphnis et Chloé* Second Suite. Brahms's First Piano Concerto is played with an impressive sense of scale by Mindru Katz (under Josef Krips in 1964), Stravinsky conducts his *Firebird* Suite (1963); there's a vigorous Tchaikovsky

they work wonderfully well. Also included in this Warner set are various tone poems and orchestral works (the Lisztian, virtually cinematic *La mer*, Introduction and Dance from *Salome*, a suite of movements from *Raymonda* and Glazunov's ballet masterpiece, *The Seasons*) as well as the various concertos, featuring the likes of violinist Rachel Barton Pine. No one with an ear for Romantic orchestral tone-painting could fail to enjoy these consistently sympathetic and vividly played performances, which are also exceedingly well recorded and offered at a usefully modest price point.

Herbert Kegel's early-1980s Dresden Philharmonic Beethoven symphony cycle for Capriccio was one of the first to appear in digital sound (alongside Otmar Suitner's set on Denon), and wears its years lightly. Best are Symphonies Nos 4 through to 8, all with their first-movement repeats intact, Kegel's manner is lively but unhurried, wholesome and direct, the playing mostly first-rate and with illuminating dialogue between winds and strings. The first three symphonies are shorn of exposition repeats and not quite on the same interpretative level as the others, the Ninth best in the middle movements. Don't expect the sort of sleek delivery and scholarly nous that Simon Rattle offers on his 2015 Berlin Philharmonic set (especially in the *Choral*) but with the Triple Concerto, *Choral Fantasy*, Brahms's *German Requiem* (the latter from Leipzig) and a disc of sundry 'showpieces' offered as part of the deal, those raised on traditional interpretative values should have a ball. I certainly did.

Ravel thrives on home soil in the hands of **Samson François** and **André Cluytens** who between them cover the complete run of piano and orchestral works, more or less, François tapping out salient detail as fastidiously as Glenn Gould does in Bach. Pianist and conductor come together in the piano concertos, the 'Left Hand' in particular hugely imposing, perhaps more so than any other version since, though Février under Munch during the war match François and Cluytens for anger and defiance (see next month's Replay). Interesting that Erato includes François's mono and stereo versions of *Le tombeau de Couperin* (where there's an issue of some dropped repeats in the earlier recording) and *Gaspard de la nuit*, the younger François rather more nimble and breathless than his older self. It's a pity that Erato didn't add Cluytens's earlier mono Ravel recordings with the French Radio National Orchestra, though they are available in the big Cluytens box (7/17). Still, these stereo remakes are among the most vivid

recordings of the period, the playing of the Paris Conservatoire Orchestra reedy and dynamic, with a keen sense of atmosphere.

An excellent Erato collection that mixes French piano and orchestral repertoire, this time adding chamber and choral works into the bargain, is devoted to the music of Gabriel Fauré. **Jean-Philippe Collard** is the 'pianist in residence', a superb musician whose playing combines clarity, brightness of tone and an acute sense of poetry. The Parrenin Quartet join Collard for the piano quartets and quintets as well as offering us the String Quartet, and there are performances featuring violinist Augustin Dumay and cellist Frédéric Lodéon. Michel Plasson is in charge of the orchestral and choral works. The range of repertoire on offer is nothing short of dazzling and anyone seeking proof of just how versatile a composer Fauré was need look no further.

One of the finest Mahler sound documents of the last century, a truly fabulous performance

Jean-François Heisser brings an appropriate elegance and rhythmic lift to a selection of piano works in the collection 'España' with music by Albéniz, Granados, Falla, Mompou and Turina, Falla's 13-minute *Fantasia Bética* being an especial highlight. I enjoyed Heisser's cool but affectionate manner in Mompou's Satie-esque *Cançons i danses*. As to music for piano and orchestra, we're given Falla's *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*, Albéniz's *Concierto fantástico* and *Rapsodia española* and Turina's *Rapsodia sinfónica*, all with the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra under Jesus López-Cobos.

Mention of Satie just now brings me to an admirable Warner collection based principally around **Aldo Ciccolini's** recordings of the piano works dating from the mid-1980s. This six-CD set has been very cleverly arranged, the first CD devoted to 'First and Last Works' (including the *Gymnopédies* and *Trois Morceaux en forme de poire*, with Gabriel Tacchino), the second to 'Mystical Works' (*Orgives*, *Vexations*, *Le fils des étoiles*, etc), the third to Studies (*The Dreamy Fish*, *Douze Petits chorals*, etc), the fourth to 'Whimsical Works' (*Descriptions automatiques*, etc), the fifth to Dance Music (*Six Gnossiennes*, *Le Piccadilly*, *La belle excentrique*, etc) and the last CD to songs with Mady Mesplé, Nicolai Gedda and Gabriel Basquier. It is a useful amalgam of programmes where

Satie can be sampled or relished at will. Performance standards are consistently high – Ciccolini as ever manages to convey musical meaning without sidestepping Satie's wryly humorous style – and so is the quality of the recordings.

Alexei Lubimov is similarly illuminating in Mozart's solo piano works for which he calls on three separate fortepianos, and the range of sounds that he conjures is at times virtually orchestral. In the great A minor Sonata (K310), via a Marc Ducornet instrument from 1984 (based on various 18th century Andreas Stein originals), the combination of a ghostly twang and percussive strumming helps focus the music's inherent drama. I've often heard it said that when it comes to expressive shading the fortepiano cannot match the pianoforte but in the hands of an artist like Lubimov – or Andreas Staier for that matter – both of whom have the knack of contrasting dynamics and varying tone colours, that is palpably untrue. The proof lies especially in various of the slow movements, the *Adagio* from the B flat Sonata (K570) for example, where Christopher Clarke's instrument after Anton Walter (c1795) produces the sort of veiled, mellow tone that a modern grand would hardly be capable of. Throughout the set Lubimov and his fortepianos deliver similar surprises that stand to stimulate as well as to edify and educate. **G**

THE RECORDINGS

'This is Leonard Bernstein – His Greatest Recordings'

Sony Classical © 19075 86186-2

'Leonard Bernstein – An American in Paris'

Warner Classics © 9029 56895-4

'The Israel Philharmonic Orchestra: 80th Anniversary'

Helicon © HEL029679

Glazunov Complete Symphonies & Concertos Sols; RSNO; Russian National Orchestra / José Serebrier

Warner Classics © 9029 56514-3

Beethoven Symphonies Brahms A German Requiem Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra / Herbert Kegel Capriccio

© 9029 56514-7

Ravel Complete Piano & Orchestral Works Samson François pf Paris Conservatoire Orchestra / André Cluytens

Erato © 9029 56514-7

Fauré Various Works

Jean-Philippe Collard, Michel Plasson, etc

Erato © 9029 56335-7

'España' Jean-François Heisser pf

Erato © 9029 56514-9

Satie Piano Works. Songs Aldo Ciccolini pf

Erato © 9029 56510-1

Mozart Keyboard Sonatas Alexei Lubimov fp

Erato © 9029 56345-8

REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings



A formidable Danish organist

Listening to (mostly vintage) organ recordings has long been a 'private passion' of mine, even though my tastes have tended towards such majestic past masters as Helmut Walcha, Karl Richter, Karl Straube and Albert Schweitzer. Anachronistic, perhaps, but when it comes to Bach and Buxtehude in particular I relish the sheer scale of the music, its presence in my mind's ear, and in general favour those organists who conjure an inspirational listening event. Such was the Danish organist Finn Viderø, who died in 1987, aged 80. On a splendid new Danacord series devoted to Viderø's recordings, Jesper Buhl informs us that this formidable player was also a composer, a musicologist, a pedagogue and the only Danish organist with a secure international reputation. He studied with the celebrated conductor of the Palestrina Choir Mogens Wöldike, took a keen interest in authentic performance practice and pursued an enlightened approach to the music he played, especially the works of Bach and Buxtehude.

This is playing with a purpose – the sense of selfless dedication is palpable

Danacord's four double packs include two that are principally devoted to the music of Bach. The first includes the *Orgel-Büchlein*, which has many highlights: *In dir ist Freude* in particular, with its hypnotically repeating ground bass; or the breathy sound of *Ich ruf' zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ*. These and the other items collected in this first instalment are played on the Marcussen organ at Sorø Church, built in 1942 (though roughly a third of the pipes are from an 1864 Gregersen instrument) and consisting of 37 stops. The LPs used are on the Haydn Society, Fonodan and Metronome labels, and the transfers by Claus Byrith do full justice to the source material, even though you can occasionally pick up the (very) faint remnants of vinyl surface noise. Also included are five chorale preludes, the B minor Prelude and Fugue,

BWV544, and the series' sole representative of Viderø's shellac legacy, a fine 1950 HMV performance of the Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV565, played on the Frederiksberg Church organ. Viderø's approach throughout is as honest as the day is long, forthright and imaginatively coloured but always with a keen sense of which pipes sound right for which piece.

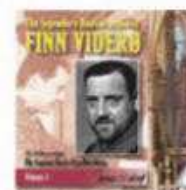
Volume 2 takes up with Bach again, scoring highest with the magnificent C major Prelude and Fugue, BWV547, and the epic variations on the chorale *O Gott, du frommer Gott*, BWV767. Other Bach pieces include BWV536, 540, 544, 546, 562, 572 and 590, as well as six chorale fuguetas, Buxtehude's wonderful *Te Deum laudamus* and a Pachelbel selection. The organs here are a Frobenius instrument at St John's Church in Vejle, and another Marcussen instrument from 1952, housed in St James's Church, Varde.

Were I to choose just one volume from the series, it would be the third because of the sovereign command that Viderø has over the music of Buxtehude, again using the Sorø Marcussen and Frobenius organs. There are numerous masterpieces featured here, among them the Prelude, Fugue and Chaconne in C, BuxWV137, a close relation of Bach's Toccata, Adagio and Fugue, BWV564, switching from a flamboyant opening to a gaily dancing gigue – a real spirit-lifter, with Viderø sounding as if he's relishing every moment. Of the 26 works included, I would also cite the large-scale Prelude and Fugue in E minor, BuxWV142, and the brilliant Prelude and Fugue in F sharp minor, BWV146. All of these works resemble in their original design, rhythmic impetus and harmonic boldness the best of Bach's keyboard toccatas. Equally striking is the Prelude and Fugue in D, BuxWV139, while Bachian grandeur again visits the concise D minor Passacaglia, BuxWV161, another instance whereby the sheer resilience of Viderø's playing, its unflagging sense of rhythm (not unlike Walcha's), holds you captive. Listen for example to how it blossoms around the 2'30" mark.

This is playing with a purpose, and that purpose is entirely musical.

Volume 4 is in many respects the most enterprising, certainly in terms of repertoire, with works by Cabezón, Sweelinck, Scheidt, Siefert, Cabanilles, Pachelbel, Dandrieu, Walther, Böhm, some anonymous composers and, most notably, Ropartz – playing that is especially atmospheric. This volume includes the last Viderø recordings, played on a Gunnar Fabricius Husted organ based on a Gregersen instrument. Again, the sense of selfless dedication is palpable, and the sound is generally excellent. Listening to these CDs has been an edifying experience, one that I look forward to repeating many times.

THE RECORDINGS



'The Legendary Danish Organist: Finn Viderø', Vol 1: Bach

Danacord (B) (2) DACOCD791/2



'The Legendary Danish Organist: Finn Viderø', Vol 2: Bach, Buxtehude, Pachelbel

Danacord (F) (2) DACOCD793/4



'The Legendary Danish Organist: Finn Viderø', Vol 3: Buxtehude

Danacord (B) (2) DACOCD795/6



'The Legendary Danish Organist: Finn Viderø', Vol 4: Cabezón, Scheidt, Siefert, Sweelinck, Walther et al

Danacord (B) (2) DACOCD797/8

Putting temperament on the line

Easy availability of recordings featuring the great Czech violinist Váša Příhoda is to say the least sporadic, which is a shame because aspects of his playing (such as his lightning bow work, trilled multiple stops and devilishly fast left-hand pizzicatos) defy description, as can be heard in this box-set



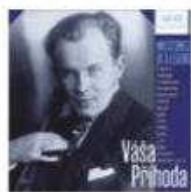
Henryk Szeryng: 'incendiary' in Ravel

context in a Paganini Sonatina arranged for violin and piano by Příhoda himself. His variegated tone and overall approach suggest rhapsodising improvisation. He was once married to Alma Rosé, whose tragic fate at Auschwitz (she led the girls' orchestra and died there, probably of food poisoning) was in marked contradistinction to his own success in Nazi-occupied territories, which blotted his post-war copybook. But he was a great player, destined to die at 59 and therefore still in his prime when he made his last recordings.

This 10-disc set, which like other titles in the series is made up of material drawn from various sources, is usefully representative, though I would have liked a few more genre pieces from the 1930s. A Wieniawski sequence includes a rather pinched-sounding transfer of a brilliant 1924 recording of the *Fantaisie Brillante* after Gounod's *Faust*; and on the same disc is Vieuxtemps's lovely Violin Concerto No 4 (recorded 1954), where Příhoda appears to chicken out of playing the admittedly tricky central scherzo. Tchaikovsky's Concerto (under Richard Austin, 1949) is the most Huberman-like account I've heard since Huberman's own, with similar portamentos, crescendos and, most significantly, maverick spirit, though in general Příhoda is the more polished player. Tartini's *Devil's Trill* Sonata is beautifully performed in a Vieuxtemps arrangement accompanied by a string trio, Příhoda's phrasing (like Huberman's in other works) combining emotional candour with occasional gypsy-style inflections. He was above all a passionate musician fuelled

by a fiery temperament, whose commitment is audible in every bar of each recording. Other works programmed are by Bazzini, Chopin, Dvořák, Elgar, Hubay, Lalo, Marx, Mozart, Sarasate, Schubert, Smetana, Strauss, Viotti, Vitali and Příhoda himself. Transfers vary from adequate to good.

THE RECORDING



'Milestones of a Legend: Václav Příhoda'
Documents © 10 600455

Aristocrat of the violin

It would be difficult to imagine a sharper contrast with Příhoda than the Polish-born, Mexican-naturalised violinist Henryk Szeryng, who although similarly adept in virtuoso repertoire produced a smoother, more rounded tone, his overall approach relatively refined. That said, his recording of Vieuxtemps's Fourth Concerto under Hans Rosbaud (Baden-Baden, 1955) is both technically breathtaking and musically seductive, the rapport with Rosbaud watertight, the scherzo deft in the extreme. I don't think I've ever heard a more compelling recording of this elegant showpiece – aristocratic is, I think, the most apt word to describe it. The same artists make the very most of Schumann's Concerto (in 1957), where Szeryng digs even deeper than on his commercial recording of the work. Likewise, an imposing live account of the Beethoven Concerto with the Philharmonia Orchestra under Otto Klemperer (1959) securely hits the target. There's also an incendiary performance of Ravel's *Tzigane* under Rosbaud; and Szeryng's mid-1950s set of Bach's solo violin works, strong readings though never overstated, roughly on a par with Milstein and Grumiaux and I'd say marginally superior to his remakes for DG.

As to the rest, familiar RCA recordings are revisited, the prizewinning Brahms Concerto under Pierre Monteux, the Tchaikovsky Concerto under Charles Munch, and much-prized duo sonata performances with Artur Schnabel, including the three Brahms sonatas, three Beethovens (both the *Spring* and *Kreutzer* are there); there's Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole* under Walter Hendl and an especially beautiful account of Brahms's Horn Trio with Joseph Eger and pianist Victor Babin. Add Ponce's Violin Concerto and you have an unmissable bargain. Other musicians featured in the same series include Guido Cantelli, Friedrich Gulda,

Wilhelm Kempff, Leonid Kogan, Riccardo Odnoposoff, Zara Nelsova, Ruggiero Ricci, Max Rostal, Wolfgang Schneiderhan, Joseph Szigeti and Rosalyn Tureck. Transfers for this particular set are very good indeed.

THE RECORDING



'Milestones of a Violin Legend: Henryk Szeryng'
Documents © 10 600451

Back from the heart

Another significant contrast in terms of violin playing is between the patrician Szeryng and the blistering Frenchman (of Moldovan parentage) Devy Erlih, whose 1969 accounts of Bach's works for solo violin combine expressive forcefulness with the utmost delicacy. Erlih employs vibrato with discretion, varying it according to where the musical line is heading, but come, say, the opening of the C major Sonata's Fugue, his approach is disarmingly gentle, which marks a change of mood after the intensity of the preceding *Adagio*. I also commend his freedom when it comes to gauging tempo (he subtly increases the pulse as the heat rises, as happens at the arpeggiated crest of the Chaconne) and the fact that chords rarely sound aggressive or ugly.

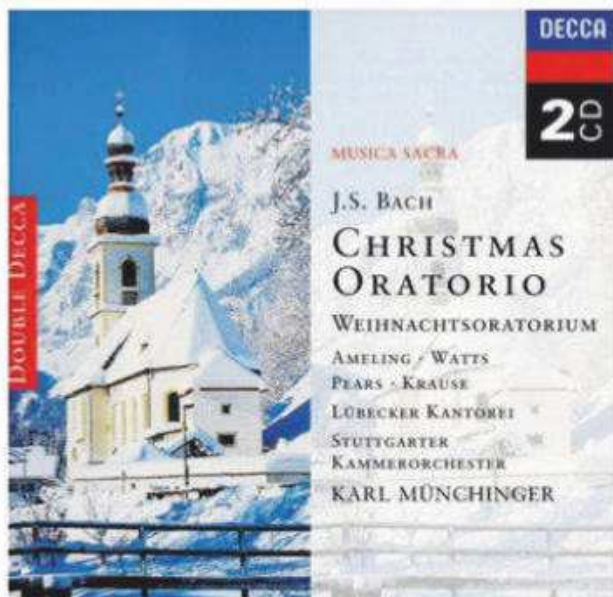
To sample the sheer beauty of Erlih's playing, you could hardly do better than to listen to either the opening *Adagio* of the G minor Sonata or the *Grave* at the start of the A minor Sonata; and for deft articulation at speed, try the *presto* Double that follows the Courante in the B minor Partita. For loving attention to each phrase, sample the flowing Double that follows the Sarabande, whereas the *Tempo di bourrée* and succeeding Double are taken at a real lick. I often hear it said – and I've even on occasion said it myself – that so much of today's violin playing lacks true individuality, or subscribes to some sort of preset template. Erlih hails from an era prior to such predictability (save, perhaps, for Hilary Hahn); he makes Bach breathe and sing and I'd commend this set to all Bach devotees who want to listen, love and learn. The stereo sound is excellent except for a modest amount of background vinyl rumble.

THE RECORDING



Bach Sonatas and Partitas, Vol 1
Devy Erlih *vn*
Doremi © 2 DHR8061/2

Classics RECONSIDERED



Jonathan Freeman-Attwood and **Lindsay Kemp** revisit Decca's 1960s recording of Bach's Christmas Oratorio from Karl Münchinger



Bach

Christmas Oratorio

Elly Ameling *sop* **Helen Watts** *contr* **Peter Pears** *ten*
Tom Krause *bass* **Lübecker Kantorei**;
Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra / Karl Münchinger
Decca

As I wrote in reviewing the DG recording under Karl Richter [12/65], I enjoyed every moment. We now have Decca's equally fine performance and an even better recording. The Lübecker Kantorei sopranos, unless I am mistaken, are boys, not women. In any case they are very good, as is the whole chorus, and so in this matter honours

are equal, as also they are between the two orchestras. The obbligato players in both recordings are a constant delight.

As regards the soloists, Fritz Wunderlich sang with lovely tone and sensitivity as the Evangelist for Richter but, though his voice is less beguiling, without Peter Pears's command of a variety of nuances. Franz Crass was apt to sing too loudly at times and though good in his arias, I prefer Tom Krause. Elly Ameling cannot quite equal Gundula Janowitz's beauty of tone but enunciates her words more clearly and is a very attractive singer.

Christa Ludwig and Helen Watts are both admirable in their arias.

Weighing up the evidence, the extra brightness and clarity of the Decca version, together with Münchinger's more dramatic approach, will for many tip the scales. Both versions communicate a sense of dedication and purpose. Both treat the chorales in a straightforward manner as if inviting congregational participation. In view of the extra special quality of the recording, then, I should give my vote to the Decca, for all other matters are really about equal.

Alec Robertson (12/67)

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood I know we're not permitted to 'compare and contrast' but it's impossible not *at least* to register that the two big Bach 'Karls' of the 1960s – Münchinger and Richter – had recorded the oratorio within 18 months of each other. What strikes me immediately is that Münchinger moves through the six parts more organically than Richter – even though the latter boasts some phenomenal set pieces and the more obviously glamorous ingredients. That said, there's glamour in both soloist rosters: Ameling, Watts, Pears and Krause *or* Janowitz, Ludwig, Wunderlich and Crass? A tough call!

I suppose I'm struck, above all, by Münchinger's spacious elegance where its unforced narrative unfolds with some stunning characterisation. I remember listening to my sister's 'highlights' LP as a teenager and yearning for Christmas when she played the luminescent Sinfonia that starts Part 2. Richter weaved his own spells but he couldn't float magically like this.

Lindsay Kemp Yes, I'm new to this recording, though there's no doubt that

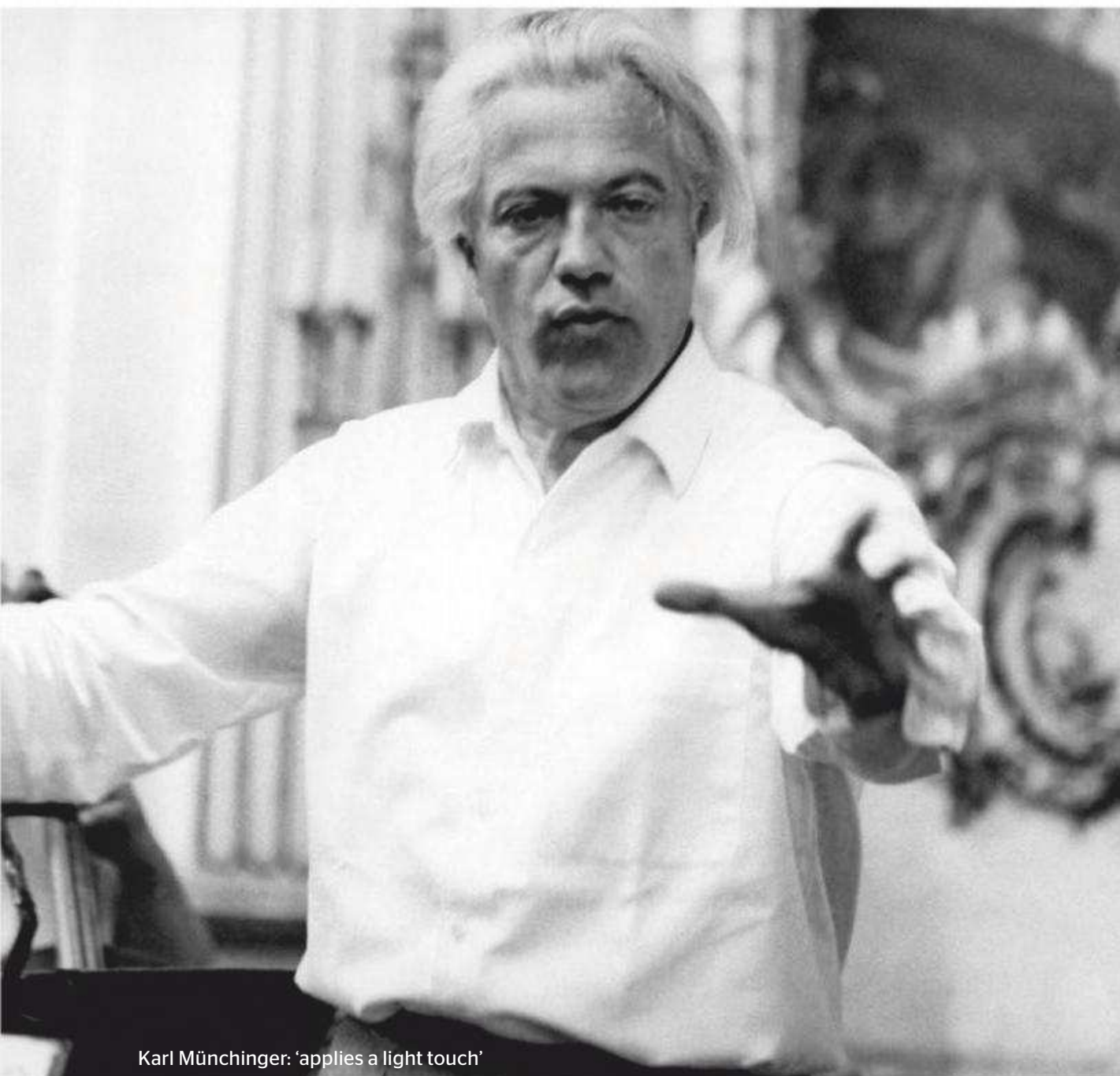
in their day this and the Richter would have been state-of-the-art, go-to authoritative Bach just as much as Harnoncourt, Gardiner and Butt have been since. I loved that Pastoral Sinfonia too. It's such a beautiful piece, Bach in Romantic mood almost, and Münchinger treats it with so much love and warmth; the last diminuendo chord lingers as if he can't bear to let it go. There were plenty of other places where I was won over by the emotional honesty of the performance, but what caught my attention especially was when they arose out of little features that are not in fashion for Bach any more, such as the held continuo chords in the recitatives that allow Tom Krause to build 'Immanuel, so süßes Wort' in Part 4 into a mini-Wagnerian climax.

JF-A That's indeed a golden moment. Those expressive choices are often seen as irreconcilable with our historically informed and post-modern view of Bach values. Almost patronisingly, a reading like this becomes a historical curiosity: 'Poor old Münchinger and Co. If only they'd know what we know now!' Then you listen to that delectable duet from Part 3 with

Elly Ameling and Tom Krause and you realise that this is artistry of extraordinary character and vitality, where the timing and coloration – in this case with those sumptuous accompanying oboes – extends far beyond fashion. It's simply great Bach performance. A lot of musicians could learn so much from the vocabulary of the older generations. It's not a problem with the Wagner legacy from the 1960s, so why poor Bach?

Ironically, though, the reason why I often appreciate Münchinger is that he applies a relatively light touch, leaning towards the best in recent 'period' versions.

LK Yes, it *is* light, and I imagine must have seemed even more so to listeners at the time. The only place where I do find heaviness is in some of the choruses, where a rather over-zealous approach to enunciation often results in equal emphasis on every beat in the bar. In triple-time movements that open Parts 1, 3 and 6 this doesn't sound right to me; some melismatic passages sound more like callous laughter than dancing for joy. The first chorus of Part 5 works better though; with the boys'



Karl Münchinger: 'applies a light touch'

whooping high notes there's a real sense here of clamour and excitement.

JF-A On the other hand, I suppose there's also the tendency – when embracing the artistic instincts of certain 'historic' figures – to be over-forgiving! I do see exactly what you mean about the choruses. There is often a default choppiness which comes with those post-war, almost neoclassical sounding chamber orchestras. It happens less with Ansermet, Prohaska and Werner than with Münchinger and Richter who, by virtue of their quest for corporate discipline, can lean towards singularly over-projected and aerated text. As you point out, we are dealing here with a boys' choir and so big-breathed and sonorous Bachian phrases are inevitably less prevalent than with mixed choirs. Part 5 is successful, I think, because the tempo is manageable and Münchinger's tendency to push forward turns into a rather fine conceit of expectancy.

LK That choppy *non legato* you mention – which you also get in Baroque orchestral playing of that time, and I assume was an attempt to let more air into the texture – is something I definitely don't miss in

modern period performances; I find the more flexible articulation that Baroque bows have brought much more human. But Münchinger is not a serious offender, and in any case is happy to mix things up; 'Bereite dich, Sion', for instance, opens with glorious rich, long lines, but almost immediately contrasts them with elegant, light-touch articulation. But while we're on the sounds of the '60s, we've got to talk about those trumpets haven't we?

JF-A Interesting what you say about phrasing in 'Bereite dich, Sion'. Doesn't this happy hybrid approach allow you to want to keep listening – because Münchinger fuels the music simultaneously with both warmth and flexibility? His intimate approach to instrumental obbligati, especially the oboes who inhabit so many dimensions in their 'commentaries', plays an important part in this. Baroque bows may bring a special kind of humanity but when the oboists are this eloquent and responsive, one becomes 'tool blind' on matters of period and modern. The echo aria in Part 4 is a case in point. Trumpets? Exasperatingly, I can't track down the players list anywhere but that *has* to be Maurice André in Part 6.


It's fabulous articulation of its kind, if not quite as nonchalantly brilliant as for Richter where the last note is beyond compare!

LK It's an amazing sound isn't it? Listening to it now almost feels a guilty pleasure! We've become so used to natural trumpets that I can't see it making a comeback. The singing, on the other hand, is pretty timeless. Ameling, Watts and Krause all sound like singers who could slot fairly easily into one of today's performances – the idea of a 'historically informed' voice is still a rather vague one. I'm not sure that Pears's attempts at fast passagework in 'Ich will nur di zu Ehren leben' would find favour today, but his acutely sensitive Evangelist is still full of wise and wonderful things, even if in places it is a little laboured.

JF-A Linking your observations, there's a curious contradiction of the valved piccolo trumpet gradually receding with natural-trumpet playing back in the ascendancy, and yet 'mainstream' voices are increasingly booked these days to tackle Bach at the expense of 'specialists'. But – let's face it – this recording is vocally a bit of a curate's egg. Alec Robertson identifies the quality of Tom Krause (a kind of genial majesty is what I hear in his 'Grosser Herr') but on reflection I wonder whether this is *really* vintage Elly Ameling, certainly compared to her cantatas with Helmut Winschermann? But I just adore Helen Watts's open tenderness in 'Schlafe, mein liebster'. Two truly distinguished Bach singers.

LK Well, it's very rare that a complete casting will work for everyone in a piece like this – responses to voices are so personal, aren't they? Ameling doesn't always seem comfortable, it's true, but when she is in the slot she still makes a lovely sound. And it certainly doesn't detract from a performance which, though fashion may have left it rather marooned in the past, is full of honesty, love and perceptive musicianship. While I wouldn't choose it over more recent ones (I love the John Butt recording for instance), I'm sure I'd have been delighted with it in 1966!

JF-A Bach instils a strong Christmas imagery running through all six parts and no recording captures Yuletide, for me, quite so naturally as this version with its marvellous combination of fervour and truthfulness in every sinew.

LK Well said – an authentically Christmassy performance, we can say. Have a happy one! 

Books



Richard Whitehouse welcomes a new biography of Elliott Carter:

'There is no one better placed to write this book than David Schiff, who was a pupil and confidant of the composer over four decades'



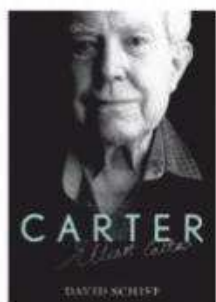
Mervyn Cooke enjoys a survey of music criticism in Britain:

'Edward J Dent typified the peculiarly British desire to disguise intellectual thought under a surface sheen of self-deprecating amateurism'

Carter

By David Schiff

Oxford University Press, HB, 296pp, £22.99
ISBN 978-0-190-25915-0



Although the Master Musicians series has been a staple of classical music books throughout the

modern era, the extent of its coverage had barely advanced beyond the mid-20th century – hence making this study of Elliott Carter (1908-2012) all the more unexpected and provocative.

Unexpected as there are numerous 'canonic' composers awaiting new or updated volumes, and provocative as none of those constituting the European avant-garde has been given the Master Musicians imprimatur. Yet contention as to American bias (Oxford University Press now having a New York base) is outweighed by the importance of Carter in the context of Western music over more than six decades, not least as a bridge between those distinctive movements of pre- and post-war modernism whose qualities he amalgamated and revitalised in intriguing ways.

Certainly there is no one better placed to undertake this book than David Schiff, who has not only essayed two earlier studies of Carter's music (Eulenberg, 1983, and Faber, 1998) but was a pupil and latterly confidant of the composer over four decades. Which in itself makes this volume a departure in Master Musicians terms, given Schiff knew Carter as a member of his social circle; an association detailed in the second chapter, which also affords pertinent insights into who Carter was that are not to be gainsaid given his frequent reticence as to matters of biography. The following chapter succinctly outlines this life within the context of unsupportive parents, lengthy study in America and France, then the qualified and sometimes patronising response of his peers as he struggled towards a personal and inclusive idiom well into his fifth decade.

The bulk of what follows is centred on the music, but here too Schiff rings the changes. Save for a one-page appendix of Carter's intervallic signatures, there are no musical examples – for which one needs to go back to the era of MM volumes as descriptive biography to find comparisons. Not that Schiff's approach is at all simplistic; rather his *modus operandi* is one of discussing the piece in question from the perspective of those works, composers and aesthetics that informed its genesis. This essentially literary analysis is initially facilitated by Carter's relatively slender early output in the 1930s and '40s and then during the painstaking creation of just seven groundbreaking works in the next two decades – during which time Carter moved methodically and surreptitiously to the forefront of contemporary music.

With those pieces from the 1970s and '80s, Schiff is on familiar ground and his overviews are informed with a knowledge borne of experience which enables him to depart decisively yet persuasively from established practice (though a few major pieces from the early 1990s have fallen through the net), culminating with his pertinent insights into the composer's two largest works, *Symphonia* and his only opera, *What Next?*. That Carter became so prolific in old age (around half of his 150 published works emerging after he turned 90) makes any detailed survey all but impossible within the MM format. Schiff's simple and effective solution is to list groups of pieces related by genre or medium, then touch on their divergences so as to reinforce the self-renewing principle which gives these 'late-late' works their sheer potency and consistency.

Most absorbing are two chapters on the song-cycles – both those to texts by Carter's relative contemporaries from the later 1970s, marking his re-engagement with literary sources after a quarter of a century, but especially those from his last decade which, as Schiff points out, merge into a 90-minute 'meta-cycle' encompassing the American modernist tradition which Carter

reappropriated on his own terms. That several of them await commercial recording (the main gaps in an extensive and still-growing discography) only increases expectation that these may yet prove his greatest overall achievement – not least in their unifying of the disjunctive and often antagonistic tendencies to have beset modernism, but which Carter was able to unify by remaining creative into his 11th decade and evolving his musical language accordingly.

The book has been expertly edited and proofed to the best traditions of the Master Musicians series, with chronologies of life and works (listed by date rather than genre, although the latter might have been preferable), and then a list of American composers and music replacing the calendar and work-list; but with the customary personalia and bibliography. Nine photographs (mostly courtesy of the Amphion Foundation) are reproduced as figures rather than plates, but this is no hardship and given their unfamiliarity these are an undeniable if incremental enhancement.

Those who have Schiff's previous books will want this too, while those seeking an introductory yet probing study could not have been better served. Whether or not this proves to be the author's last word on Carter, his insights and belief in this music have left many listeners in his debt.

Richard Whitehouse

British Musical Criticism and Intellectual Thought, 1850-1950

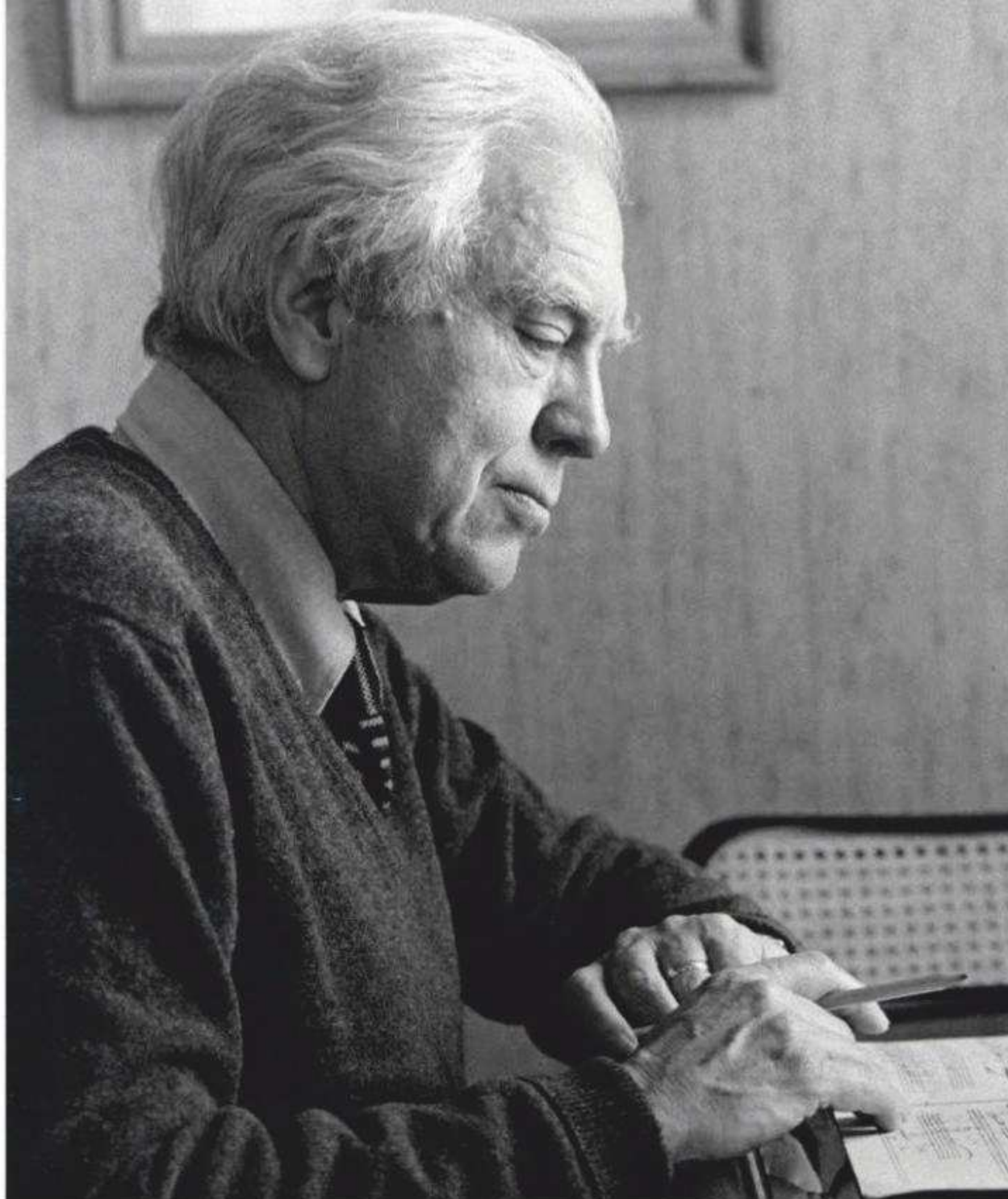
Edited by Jeremy Dibble and Julian Horton

The Boydell Press, HB, 390pp, £65

ISBN 978-1-783-27287-7



'For us in England, who are obliged to earn our living by scribbling about music, it is a very good thing that no



Oxford University Press's Master Musicians series welcomes Elliott Carter as the subject of its latest volume

one attaches much weight to our opinions.' So wrote Edward J Dent in 1921, just five years before he became Professor of Music at Cambridge, and his remark typifies the peculiarly British desire to disguise intellectual thought under a surface sheen of self-deprecating amateurism. As this impressive collection of new essays demonstrates, however, the critical landscape in British music between 1850 and 1950 was truly astonishing in its range and depth of thinking, its often partisan passions, and the considerable wit, insight and sophistication with which those passions were conveyed.

The book's 14 essays are organised in roughly chronological order, and can be read consecutively as a compelling narrative. In their refreshingly concise introduction, the editors survey the dauntingly large set of 'isms' to which British writings on music have successively succumbed. (Amusingly, Jonathan Clinch's chapter on Herbert Howells quotes the latter's 1937 lecture for the BBC in which he declared that criticism had been 'maimed' by the 'rude hands of those who have operated upon it in search of one deadly -ism after another'.) Peter Horton's

contribution summarises the work of early Victorian critics, when the national characteristics of 'relying on satire, damning with faint praise or, almost as a matter of principle, criticising anything new' first became established. The last gasp of the worst excesses of these tendencies came with the writings of George Bernard Shaw, whose 'jeering savagery', 'animated contempt' and brutal dismissal of the 'sham classics' composed by Parry and Stanford is given a thoughtful reappraisal by Harry White.

While Karen Arrandale's essay on Dent keeps Cambridge on the critical map, two chapters (by Bennett Zon and Jeremy Dibble) explore the contrasting views of the Oxford writers Herbert Spencer and Ernest Walker, the former strongly influenced by an evolutionary model of stylistic development and the latter prioritising musical texts as almost abstract phenomena. In common with other writers represented in the book, most notably Vaughan Williams (the aesthetic stance of whose literary output is assessed by Aidan J Thomson), Walker is proud of his early music heritage, though he does not approach this revered repertoire

uncritically: he considered Thomas Whythorne's 1571 part-songs as 'miserably feeble rubbish', and found some of Purcell's music marred by a 'pottering scrappiness'. Dent reappears in Sarah Collins's essay on anti-intellectualism, which illuminates the longstanding schism between musicians working in academia and those based in the conservatoires. Dent (in 1924) again offered a revealing comment on this situation: 'We [academics] may be able to do our jobs a great deal better than the professional gang [conservatory professors], but we always behave as if we were amateurs.'

As Paul Watt demonstrates, the London critic Ernest Newman was important for his 'Europeanization of musical thought' and adherence to a rationalist ideology which viewed criticism as akin to a science; most importantly, composers and their music came to be seen as products of their specific times and cultures. Seemingly at the other end of the spectrum were Donald Francis Tovey's value judgements masquerading as analysis, considered afresh here (with corrective analytical examples of his own) by Julian Horton. Among the other commentators covered by the book are Bernard van Dieren, Peter Warlock and Cecil Gray (in a chapter by Séamas de Barra), and Constant Lambert, whose brilliant if wayward 1934 book *Music Ho!* is surveyed by Christopher Mark. In a timely reminder that the British music scene was inhabited by intelligent women, too, Philip Ross Bullock discusses the work of Rosa Newmarch, whose deep involvement with Russian music proved especially influential. Hans Keller, to whom the final chapter (by Patrick Zuk) is devoted, dismissed music criticism as a 'racket' and a 'phoney profession', but the overwhelming impression the book's coverage leaves is of a healthy, rich critical tradition which until now has never been so thoroughly assessed.

As is to be expected with such an experienced team of editors and contributors, the book's text is impeccably presented throughout, and a delight to read. Unfortunately, however, the volume's index is a disappointingly uncomprehensive, unbalanced and unsystematic affair that really shouldn't have made it past editorial scrutiny. This is a pity, as the book is likely to prove itself to be an indispensable resource for anyone interested in British music, and any readers of the print edition who choose not to read it from cover to cover will find navigating the riches of its contents a potentially frustrating experience.

Mervyn Cooke

THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

Rossini's *La Cenerentola*

Richard Osborne explores the recordings of an opera that skilfully combines comedy and humanity

We may be about to enter pantomime season but the first thing to recognise about Rossini's *La Cenerentola* is that it's no pantomime. Yes, it is very funny in places but it's also one of Rossini's most humane operas and, at times, one of his most disturbing.

Rossini's adaptation of the fairy tale has nothing to do with wicked stepmothers, pumpkin coaches or glass slippers. His immediate cue came from a libretto provided by the French playwright Charles-Guillaume Étienne for Nicolò Isouard in Paris in 1810. In Étienne's version, the vindictive parent is a venal aristocrat who has fallen on hard times. Seeing Isouard's *Cendrillon* (enchantly revived this summer by Bampton Classical Opera), it's clear that Rossini and his librettist went much further than Étienne in transforming the fairy tale into what emerges as an edgy comedy of manners, shot through with a powerful strain of romantic pathos. That same year, 1817, Jane Austen was giving the Cinderella archetype a not dissimilar makeover in her novel *Persuasion*.

The very name Cinderella suggests ashes and expiation. And how better to express that solitary, expiatory mood than in the sad minor-key folk song with which Rossini's Cenerentola announces herself? (There are echoes here of Desdemona's 'Willow Song', movingly set by Rossini as part of his *Otello* the previous autumn.)

The human dimension of Rossini's treatment is evident in the care he lavishes on Cenerentola's first encounter with Prince Ramiro. It's a scene in which both characters appear to be undergoing

something of an existential crisis. Yet worse is to follow. When the Prince's emissary arrives at the Magnifico household with a list of eligible maidens, Magnifico, who has embezzled Cenerentola's inheritance, denies that she exists, despite the fact that she's standing right beside him.

As Magnifico repeats his morbid lie, the orchestra produces several shocked judders of sound, before making a plaintive descent towards one of Italian opera's most charged silences. At which point, having reduced his audience to numbed disbelief, Rossini launches into one of those ensembles in which the assembled company attempts to work out who precisely is duping whom.

It's a tricky scene to play. Ham it up, and you destroy the moment; play it straight, and you risk losing the comic dimension that continues to lurk beneath the surface.

The opera is equally tricky to cast. The principal problem is the basses: three of them, all nicely differentiated. Where Magnifico is a traditional *buffo*, Alidoro, the Prince's tutor and undercover enabler, is more a *basso cantante*. He's richly provided for in the Act 1 aria which Rossini eventually wrote to replace his assistant's stop-gap effort for the 1817 premiere.

The most complex of the bass roles vocally (and the lowest) is that of the Prince's servant, Dandini. He has some well-bred coloratura to get through in his role as princely impersonator, yet his is also a *buffo* role. It's in this guise that he joins the Prince in that most brilliantly conspiratorial of all Rossini duets, 'Zitto, zitto; piano, piano'. And it's Dandini who is gifted one of the most joyous moments in all opera when, realising that the game is up and Cenerentola has eyes only for the

prince's 'servant', he decides to reveal to a shell-shocked Don Magnifico that he's the monkey, not the organ-grinder.

EARLY RECORDINGS

Nowhere is that scene better played on record than by Sesto Bruscantini and Ian Wallace in a famous 1953 Glyndebourne recording led by **Vittorio Gui**. Gui has had few equals for the lift and ease of his Rossini conducting; and he had a fine cast, on the male side at least, with Juan Oncina, as an agreeably elegant Prince, joining Bruscantini and Wallace. Unfortunately, the set is quite heavily cut and the Spanish mezzo-soprano Marina de Gabarain, though rich in empathy, is occasionally taxed by the role technically. Her final showpiece aria of forgiveness was recorded, not with Gui, but with his assistant Bryan Balkwill during a later remake session.

The great Italian mezzo Giulietta Simionato considered this the most 'demanding in agility' of any mezzo aria she knew, though she sails through it easily enough in the 1949 recording she made for Italian Radio in Turin under the characteristically sure-footed direction of Mario Rossi (Cetra, 2/62 – nla). Her Prince is Tito Schipa's pupil Cesare Valletti but the Dandini is a disaster and the text is even more heavily cut than in the Glyndebourne recording.

It's astonishing how well the old mono recordings cope with the typical Rossini imbroglio. Still, no one was quite prepared for the impact of Decca's 1963 SonicStage stereophonic spectacular, recorded under Erik Smith's direction in Florence's Teatro della Pergola (Decca, 5/92 – nla). Conducted with unstoppable, over-the-



Cinderella and her Fairy Godmother, by Lucien Pissarro (1863-1944): in Rossini's opera, the supernatural visitor is replaced by the philosopher Alidoro

top relish by the 61-year-old Oliviero De Fabritiis, the performance itself is also somewhat larger than life. In the end, it's all a bit too much, but there are delights to be had from a cast that includes Giulietta Simionato (now 53 but still sounding 23),

Ugo Benelli, Paolo Montarsolo and the indefatigable Bruscantini.

ENTER THE URTEXT

After the roller coaster of the De Fabritiis recording, with its beefed-up

orchestrations and emphasis on old-school *buffo* larkiness, the opera found itself stripped back to source. As I describe in this issue's cover feature, the young Italian conductor Alberto Zedda had put the cat among the pigeons, first by discovering



Frederica von Stade takes the title-role in Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's 1981 Milanese production

how down the years the scores of *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and *La Cenerentola* had been altered and misprinted, and then by coming up with a pair of critical editions no one could afford to ignore.

The first recording of Zedda's new edition was made under **Claudio Abbado's** direction after performances at the 1971 Edinburgh Festival. The cast is headed by Teresa Berganza, a much sought-after Cenerentola but a rather bland one theatrically. The cast also includes Luigi Alva, Renato Capecchi and Paolo Montarsolo. It's a strong line-up. But the time had not yet arrived when singers' techniques were entirely aligned with the demands made by the opera's coloratura and *opera seria* elements. There are also aggravating small cuts in unexpected places.

A high-quality West German Radio recording, made in Cologne in 1980, took the idea of authenticity a stage further by deploying the period-instrument Cappella Coloniensis under the direction of the young **Gabriele Ferro**. Period instruments would not be used again until **Vladimir Jurowski** switched horses at Glyndebourne

in 2007 and engaged the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment for a revival of the admired Peter Hall production. Unfortunately Glyndebourne's in-house recording of the live stage performance lacks immediacy and focus. The 1980 Cologne radio recording suffers no such disadvantage, though the production itself has a slightly 'manufactured' feel. The set's principal interest lies in the Cenerentola of Lucia Valentini Terrani.

Having moved to Philips, producer Erik Smith assembled a surprisingly heavyweight cast for a 1987 recording conducted by **Neville Marriner**. It's a performance that is never entirely at ease vocally. Ruggiero Raimondi was a practised Rossinian but his Magnifico is more effective in the wine cellar than in the parlour, where his pantomime approach threatens to wreck the scene in which Magnifico denies Cenerentola's existence. Agnes Baltsa's Cenerentola grows more formidable the more the drama unfolds.

I doubt whether anyone has conducted more performances of *La Cenerentola*, in a greater variety of productions or – more worryingly – in a greater variety of ways

than **Carlo Rizzi**. He is at his most erratic in a 2005 Munich concert performance whose sole interest is Vesselina Kasarova's Cenerentola. His conducting is more cogent in a live performance taken from the 2000 Pesaro Rossini Festival featuring Sonia Ganassi and Juan Diego Flórez. But it's a rickety affair, none too well recorded.

The best of the Rizzi performances is the first, a studio recording made in London in 1994. If some Cenerentolas underplay for the microphones, Jennifer Larmore tends to overplay, as if she doesn't entirely trust Rossini's ability to convey Cenerentola's sense of panic with cleverly contrived *parlando* writing over subtly shifting harmonies. Alessandro Corbelli is superb as Magnifico and Raul Giménez is a vocally reliable Ramiro. But, once again, it's the Dandini who lets the side down.

Rizzi mostly prefers pace over point, as does **Riccardo Chailly** in an over-drilled 1992 Bologna studio recording. Cecilia Bartoli's Cenerentola is the obvious lure, though all she can deliver in such straitened circumstances is an exactly *sung* Cenerentola that comes up short where ease and naturalness of utterance are required.

In the end, we would have to wait until 2004 for a performance in which we have a Cenerentola, the young Joyce DiDonato, who can blend singing of high culture and finish with characterisation that is skilled and sympathetic. Brilliantly cast by conductor-cum-editor **Alberto Zedda**, the set boasts a superb trio of basses – Paolo Bordogna as Dandini, Luca Pisaroni as Alidoro and a matchless Magnifico from Bruno Praticò – along with a first-rate Prince, José Manuel Zapata.

Following his own critical edition, Zedda includes the cavaliers' chorus at the start of Act 2. The music is by Rossini's assistant (self-evidently so) but it was played at the first performance and it makes a livelier start to the act than the usual dry recitative. As for this unstoppably vital 74-year-old's conducting, it's a masterclass in how a Rossini score should be directed.

Unlike many such collaborations between the Rossini in Wildbad festival

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La Scala, Milan / Claudio Abbado

DG (M) ② DVD 073 4096GH

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requires: comedy, pathos and high drama, all gently overlaid with a subversive sense of pantomime. With superb performances from the entire company, this is Rossini at his cornucopian best.

MATCHLESS ON CD

Rossini in Wildbad / Alberto Zedda

Naxos (B) ② 8 660191/2

Superbly led by Zedda, whose knowledge and love of this opera was second to none,



this is as near-perfect a performance as we have yet had on record. The young Joyce DiDonato stars as a fraught and fragile yet ultimately radiant Cenerentola.

OLD-WORLD CHARM

Glyndebourne Op / Vittorio Gui

Warner Classics (B) ② D 028846-2

There are occasional cuts and the Cenerentola is not always at ease in her role,



but nowhere on record are the comic scenes better played than in this pioneering 1953 staging, commissioned and led by the incomparable Vittorio Gui.

and South-West German Radio, the performance was recorded, not live on stage during the festival, but in a bespoke concert performance later in the year. The technical quality is first-rate.

THE OPERA ON STAGE

Richly satisfying as that CD recording is, there are times when I sense that *La Cenerentola* needs to be seen as well as heard. It's only then that the human dimension of this greatest of Rossini comedies fully registers.

Take the moment in **John Cox's** 1983 Glyndebourne production when Magnifico (the unforgettable Claudio Desderi) shoots a glance of pure malevolence at the hapless Cenerentola whose status he is attempting to demean. It's a glance that generates a nervous titter in the Glyndebourne audience, confirming that, like much great comedy, *La Cenerentola* is funny only up to a point.

That Glyndebourne production, with its periwigs and cardboard cut-out sets, comes as close as any to replicating the spirit of Perrault's 1698 fairy-tale *Cinderella*. It's a staging that seems dated now, as it probably did then to Peter Hall, the incoming director of productions, who would end his own long and distinguished association with Glyndebourne with a very different take on the opera.

There are other productions from that period which look equally dated. Michael Hampe's 1988 Salzburg Festival production (Arthaus, 3/93 – nla) is burdened by its own grandeur. The performance preserves Ann Murray's Cenerentola and Walter Berry's unexpectedly rubicund and entertaining Don Magnifico; and this is the more urbane of Chailly's two recorded accounts of the score. But the interest is largely documentary.

Roberto De Simone's Bologna staging, filmed on stage in Houston in 1995, is an all-Italian affair set in the Italian 18th century with more brooding neo-Baroque sets, and an extravagantly painted and bewigged Dandini – the great Alessandro Corbelli – looking for all the world like a character from one of those wonderful Regency episodes of *Blackadder*. With Bruno Campanella in the pit, Cecilia Bartoli's delivery of the coloratura is a good deal less manic than on the Chailly CDs. But her acting is too 'knowing': fine for Rosina, less so for the emotionally stricken Cinderella.

After a 180-year wait, the New York Met finally condescended to stage this, in every sense of the word, Cinderella of an opera, principally as a vehicle for Bartoli.



The first Cenerentola: Gertrude Righetti Giorgi

Whatever the merits of Elina Garanča's Cenerentola and Lawrence Brownlee's Prince in a revival filmed in 2009, they are cancelled out by **Cesare Lievi's** dehumanised and dehumanising staging with its Magritte-inspired designs.

With the work's acceptance into the wider operatic canon, so 'Director's

Theatre' moved in with bizarre stagings framing superstar turns. What chance do Joyce DiDonato and her admittedly largely charmless Prince, Juan Diego Flórez, have against the sherbet-coloured sets of a production by **Joan Font** where the stagehands form a corps de ballet and the extras are dressed as rodents? And what of **Daniele Abbado's** production for Bari's rebuilt Teatro Petruzzelli in 2010? It's one thing to update the opera, quite another to set the action in a featureless 1970s kitchen in a deliberate attempt to eradicate all taint of the Cinderella story.

Superior by a country mile is the made-for-television production which **Paul Curran** directed in Genoa in 2006. Set in Naples in 1912, at a time when the class divisions Rossini himself would have known were still very much in evidence, the all-Italian cast has in its midst the Magnifico of Alfonso Antoniazzi. A Bruscantini pupil, Antoniazzi has about him something of the great French comedian Jacques Tati, not least in his ability to play Magnifico's induction as Superintendent of the Prince's cellars (a scene heavily raided by Verdi for *Falstaff*) as a legless drunk. Not everything works as well. But with the rest of the cast doing reliable work, this is the best of the updated versions of the opera on DVD.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

RECORDING DATE / ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1953 Gabarain ^C , Oncina ^R , Bruscantini ^D , Wallace ^M ; Glyndebourne Op / Gui	Warner (B) (2) (D) 028846-2 (7/54 ^R)
1971 Berganza ^C , Alva ^R , Capeccchi ^D , Montarsolo ^M ; Scala, Milan / C Abbado	DG (S) (2) 477 5659GOH2 (11/72 ^R)
1980 Valentini Terrani ^C , Araiza ^R , Trimarchi ^D , Dara ^M ; Cappella Coloniensis / Ferro	Sony (S) (2) 19075 81128-2 (1/85 ^R)
1981 Von Stade ^C , Araiza ^R , Desderi ^D , Montarsolo ^M ; Scala, Milan / C Abbado (<i>dir</i> Ponnellet)	DG (M) (2) (DVD) 073 4096GH (11/88 ^R)
1983 Kuhlmann ^C , Dale ^R , Rinaldi ^D , Desderi ^M ; LPO / Renzetti (<i>dir</i> Cox)	Warner (F) (DVD) 5046 70940-2
1987 Baltsa ^C , Araiza ^R , Alaimo ^D , Raimondi ^M ; ASMF / Marriner	Decca (S) (2) (D) 470 580-2 (11/88 ^R)
1992 Bartoli ^C , Matteuzzi ^R , Corbelli ^D , Dara ^M ; Comunale Th, Bologna / Chailly	Decca (M) (2) 436 902-2DHO2 (11/93); (M) (2) 478 3456DM2
1994 Larmore ^C , Giménez ^R , Quillico ^D , Corbelli ^M ; Royal Op / Rizzi	Warner Classics (S) (2) (D) 4509 94553-2 (4/95)
1995 Bartoli ^C , Giménez ^R , Corbelli ^D , Dara ^M ; Houston Op / Campanella (<i>dir</i> R De Simone)	Decca (B) (2) (DVD) 071 444-9DH (8/96 ^R , 11/01)
2000 Ganassi ^C , Flórez ^R , di Candia ^D , Praticò ^M ; Prague CO / Rizzi	Rossini Opera Festival (F) (2) ROF10033 (4/03)
2004 DiDonato ^C , Zapata ^R , Bordogna ^D , Praticò ^M ; SWR Rad Orch / Zedda	Naxos (B) (2) 8 660191/2
2005 Donose ^C , Mironov ^R , Alberghini ^D , Di Pasquale ^M ; LPO / Jurowski (<i>dir</i> Hall)	Opus Arte (F) (2) (DVD) OA0944D; (F) (S) OABD7008D (5/06)
2007 Donose ^C , Mironov ^R , Spagnoli ^D , Corbelli ^M ; OAE / Jurowski	Glyndebourne (M) (2) GFOCD018-07 (10/13)
2005 Kasarova ^C , Siragusa ^R , Chernov ^D , B De Simone ^M ; Munich Rad Orch / Rizzi	RCA (F) (2) 82876 86500-2
2006 Ganassi ^C , Siragusa ^R , Vinco ^D , Antoniazzi ^M ; Carlo Felice Th, Genoa / Palumbo (<i>dir</i> Curran)	Arthaus (F) (2) (DVD) 107 311; TDK (F) (2) (DVD) DVWW-OPLACEN
2009 Garanča ^C , Brownlee ^R , Alberghini ^D , Corbelli ^M ; Met Op, New York / Benini (<i>dir</i> Lievi)	DG (M) (2) (DVD) 073 4577GH2 (5/10); (F) (S) 073 5014GH
2009 DiDonato ^C , Flórez ^R , Menéndez ^D , B De Simone ^M ; Liceu Th, Barcelona / Summers (<i>dir</i> Font)	Decca (F) (DVD) 074 3305DH; (F) (S) 0743333DH
2010 Lo Monaco ^C , Mironov ^R , De Candia ^D , Bordogna ^M ; Fondazione Petruzzelli, Bari / Pidò (<i>dir</i> D Abbado)	Dynamic (F) (2) (DVD) 33662

Key: ^CCenerentola ^RDon Ramiro ^DDandini ^MDon Magnifico

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Ruxandra Donose (Cenerentola) and Maxim Mironov (Ramiro) in Peter Hall's Glyndebourne production – Richard Osborne's top choice

HOME TRUTHS AND COMIC REVELS

Happily, there are two other accounts of the opera on DVD, both unmissable, the one complementary to the other.

When the curtain goes up on **Peter Hall's** 2005 Glyndebourne staging, we find ourselves in one of those high-ceilinged stone kitchens that are a feature of so many ancient manor houses and castles. It's a set that would suit equally well a play such as Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*. Which is how Hall mainly plays the opera, naturalistically, as a late 18th-century English comedy.

Seated in an ancient wing-chair that's as torn and grease-stained as its occupant is Don Magnifico, Luciano Di Pasquale. One of the great Magnificos, Di Pasquale is a huge, shabby, pot-bellied ruffian of a man; a kind of rural Falstaff, though rather more sinister. Simone Alberghini might be a semitone light at the very bottom of his register but he is a fine Dandini. As for the charismatic young Russian Maxim Mironov, he 'owns' the role of the Prince as no other *tenore di grazia* has done in recent times. Similarly, the technically superb Roxandra Donose catches Cenerentola's innate goodness and strength, her beauty and serious-mindedness, as well as any latter-day performer. Jurowski's conducting is speedy, crisp and smart as a whip.

Hall's production has its filmic elements, lowering the lights to 'freeze' those moments when Rossini pitches his players into a vortex of panic and private doubt.

Television director Robin Lough also uses discreetly deployed filmic devices to translate this superb production from stage to screen.

Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's Rossini was famous for its inventiveness – the first idea as dazzling as the 101st – and the choreographic brilliance of his staging. One thinks of the wonderful conceit of the Prince and Dandini lost in a maze in 'Zitto, zitto', or the slick timing and unabashed slapstick of the great 'revelation' scene between Magnifico and Dandini. Like the great Ingmar Bergman, Ponnelle had a genius both for editing and for getting actors to play to camera.

Apart from Paolo Montarsolo, whose Magnifico Alastair Sim might have wondered at, the cast for this 1981 filmed recreation of a La Scala, Milan staging is very different from that on Claudio Abbado's earlier CD recording. As Cenerentola, Frederica von Stade has just about everything the role requires, including a well-honed vocal technique and a stage persona that catches to perfection that special mix of unaffected beauty and inner resolve which gives Cenerentola her appeal.

Claudio Desderi's Dandini and Francisco Araiza's Prince are both strongly played. Desderi knows exactly what to do with Rossini's cod-coloratura as he makes his ludicrously self-regarding entry along a red carpet lined by pink-coated, rose-bearing retainers. Araiza, meanwhile, electrifies in the big moments. I think of his terrifying

put-down of the Magnifico snobocracy after his announcement that Cenerentola is to be his wife. 'I swear she will be mine!' he cries. And, my goodness, he means it.

With Abbado conducting with more pace and aural zing, and the orchestra of La Scala playing with more point and relish than the gentlemen of the LSO on the earlier CD set, you feel – quite literally – that everyone's speaking the same language.

There's a line in Renée de Saussine's biography of Paganini where she talks about Rossini's operas humming like a beehive on a summer's day. For all the darkness that lurks about this greatest of Rossini comedies, Ponnelle's film does just that.

In the final analysis, the Ponnelle is an entertainment for high days and holidays, Christmas included, the Peter Hall a staging for all seasons. Spoiled for choice, simply check the calendar and take your pick. **G**

TOP CHOICE

Glyndebourne Op / Vladimir Jurowski

Opus Arte **Ⓔ** **Ⓜ** **DVD** OA0944D

With its period setting and naturalistic style, Peter Hall's classic 2005 staging catches the



darkness of the opera, yet such is the production's truthfulness to character and detail, the lights shine out all the more brightly when the web is finally untangled and goodness prevails.

PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

Presenting live concert and opera performances from around the world and reviews of archived music-making available online to stream where you want, when you want

Vienna Konzerthaus & online at Takt 1

Fazil Say and Camerata Salzburg, December 6

There's nothing inherently Christmassy about any of the repertoire on offer from Salzburg Camerata, but there certainly is a thoroughly festive feel about it. The concerto sees Fazil Say perform Beethoven's *Emperor* Piano Concerto, followed by Mozart's jubilant *Posthorn* Serenade in D, K320.

konzerthaus.at, takt1.com

Orchestra Hall, Detroit & online on the orchestra's website

Tetzlaff plays Brahms, December 7

Christian Tetzlaff, winner of this year's Concerto category in the *Gramophone* Awards for his two Bartók violin concertos, brings the Brahms concerto to the Detroit Symphony Orchestra for this concert under the guest baton of Carlos Miguel Prieto. Also on the programme is Beethoven's Symphony No 5.

dso.org.uk

Concertgebouw, Amsterdam & online

Radolović plays Khachaturian, December 9

The Serbian violinist Nemanja Radolović is not an artist we tend to associate with gentle Sunday morning coffee concerts, he's so very larger than life. So we're especially excited to

see that he's playing Khachaturian's Violin Concerto for one of the Concertgebouw's free live-streamed Sunday lunchtime concerts, supported by the Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic Orchestra under Sascha Goetzel (the orchestral collaborators you can hear with him on his 2017 Tchaikovsky Concerto for DG). Stravinsky's *Firebird* Suite is the other work on the programme.

concertgebouw.nl/en/live-streams

Barbican & YouTube & medici.tv

Rattle conducts Folk Roots, Urban Roots, December 13

The LSO are billing this one as Simon Rattle's most ambitious programme yet, and certainly it's not looking like your average piece of programming. A combination of jubilant Eastern European folk music, swinging Latin-American rhythms and toe-tapping jazz. Music ticking the first of those themes opens the concert, with Bartók's *Hungarian Peasant Songs* sung by the tenor Edgaras Montivas followed by Szymanowski's *Harnasie*. Next up is Stravinsky's jazzy *Ebony* Concerto with clarinet soloist Chris Richards. Next, the Labèque sisters enter for the tango rhythms of *Nazareno* by Osvaldo Golijov, arranged by Gonzalo Grau, for two pianos and orchestra.

The concert then concludes with Bernstein's *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs*. So, all pretty energising stuff. Viewers of the live stream can tune in at 7pm for a live introduction from backstage.

lso.co.uk, youtube.com/user/lso, medici.tv

Metropolitan Opera, New York & cinemas worldwide

La traviata, December 15

As non-Christmassy operas go, Verdi's *La traviata* feels like a natural fit for the Christmas season with its sumptuous crowd scenes and famous tunes. Clearly that's what New York's Met thought too, and Michael Mayer's richly textured new production certainly looks the part. Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducts an all-star cast led by Diana Damrau as the tragic heroine, Violetta, with Juan Diego Flórez returning to the Met for the first time in five seasons to sing the role of Alfredo. Quinn Kelsey is Germont.

metopera.org/season/in-cinemas/

Orchestra Hall, Detroit & online on the orchestra's website

Nikolaj Znaider and Jean-Guihen Queyras visit Detroit, December 15

Nikolaj Znaider, as conductor rather than

ONLINE OPERA REVIEW

A brand-new comic opera from Finland by the jazz pianist Iro Rantala to a libretto by the novelist Minna Lindgren

Rantala

There is efficiency in Ilro Rantala and Minna Lindgren's new opera *Sanatorio Express*, set in a profit-driven sanatorium, and modelled on Italian *opera buffa* from score to plot. We get a contemporary story laced with satire (aimed at the well-being industry) that straightforwardly introduces its stock characters; an ensemble ends each act, everyone comes to their senses at the last (the quack who runs the institution is exposed) and the residual moral message is as clear as day.

Ilro Rantala's revue-style score has an easy swing and mixes the banal with the momentarily inspired. It delights in the



Italianate gabble of sung Finnish but some jokes are lost in translation. The production is basic – particularly thrifty in the choreography department – and has the air of an end-of-the-pier entertainment. The opera is best

approached with that in mind.

An ensemble cast is led by Johanna Rusanen and Waltteri Torikka as the struggling husband and wife (Prommers might remember them as the doomed brother and sister in Sakari Oramo's 2015 *Kullervo*). Both are in fine voice and Rusanen is the consummate entertainer against her 'straight woman', Päivi Nisula's browbeaten Receptionist.

Some of the characters' revelations are a little clunky but there is plenty of charm and perky precision in Kalle Kuusava's conducting. **Andrew Mellor**

Available to view, free of charge, until April 1, 2019 at operavision.eu

violinist, returns to the Detroit Symphony for a Strauss and Schumann programme that has the particular draw of Jean-Guihen Queyras as soloist in Schumann's Cello Concerto. Opening the concert is the thrilling Overture to Johann Strauss II's *Die Fledermaus*. After the cello concerto comes Schumann's *Manfred* Overture, before the concert closes with Richard Strauss's Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier*. dso.org

Concertgebouw, Amsterdam & online

St John's College Choir, December 16

British readers might find it funny to be directed towards hearing the Choir of St John's College Cambridge in Amsterdam. However, unless you're actually based in Cambridge, you can generally only enjoy this top choir in audio form, via its audio webcasts, so this free Concertgebouw stream is a perfect opportunity to actually see them too. The carols on this festival programme include William Mathias's *Ave Rex*, Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*, Poulenc's *Quatre motets pour le temps de Noël* and Gruber's *Silent Night*.

concertgebouw.nl/en/live-streams

Grieghallen, Bergen & online

Bach Christmas Oratorio, December 17

This live-streamed concert from Bergen presents the first three cantatas in Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* cycle which recounts the narrative from the expectation of Christ's birth to his infancy, and for it they've chosen a line-up of musicians from near and far. Home-grown are the Bergen Philharmonic Chorus and Orchestra and the Edvard Grieg Kor, as well as the confirmed soprano Vigdis Unsgård, the mezzo soprano Marianne Beate Kielland, and the tenor Halvor Melien. Leading them, though, is the Baroque music specialist and Artistic Director of the Innsbruck Early Music Festival, Alessandro de Marchi.

bergenphillive.no

Philharmonie Berlin & online

Iván Fischer conducts Schubert, December 22

This guest appearance by Iván Fischer with the Berlin Philharmonic makes some clever connections. The evening's big orchestral work is Schubert's *Great C* major Symphony. Alongside that are two smaller orchestral pieces by Schubert's admirer, Dvořák: Nos 6 and 10 from his Op 59 *Legends*; and this work, originally written for four-hand piano and later also arranged for orchestra, was dedicated to the Viennese critic Eduard Hanslick, who in turn was one of the harshest critics of the composer whose orchestral songs sung by the baritone Christian Gerhaher inhabit the middle of the programme, Hugo Wolf.

digitalconcerthall.com

ONLINE CONCERT REVIEW

Gustavo Dudamel conducts two 20th-century symphonies in Berlin



Bernstein • Shostakovich

The British Board of Film Classification once notoriously labelled *Finding Nemo* as 'containing scenes of mild peril', a phrase which drew much derision. 'Mild peril', however, is as perilous as this Berlin Philharmonic Shostakovich Fifth Symphony gets under Gustavo Dudamel, available to view via the Digital Concert Hall. It's extremely secure playing – rock solid horns, powerhouse woodwinds – but little sense of danger. It's like slickly polished marble when something more granitic is required.

Dudamel handles the emotional climax of the slow movement well, unhurried and expansive. Other highlights include rasping basses to launch the Scherzo with a sense of urgency and thunderous timpani playing from Wieland Welzel

powering through Dudamel's deliberate pace for the finale.

Leonard Bernstein's Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story* was the dimpled Dudamel's calling card for years. He has a natural affinity with Bernstein's rhythms which are most obvious here in the peppy second movement of the *Jeremiah* Symphony, complete with maracas beaten on timpani heads. Elsewhere, he sustains the sombre mood of the piece via a big-hearted string sound. I've heard plusher mezzo voices in the Lamentation final movement, but Tamara Mumford, despite quite a heavy vibrato, gives a suitably emotional reading.

Mark Pullinger

Available via various subscription packages to the Digital Concert Hall, from seven days (€9.90) to 12 months (€149), at digitalconcerthall.com

Vienna Konzerthaus & Takt1

Orozco-Estrada conducts Beethoven's Symphony No 9, January 2

What music could make for a more uplifting start to 2019 than Beethoven's *Choral* Symphony? It's a fine line-up of musicians too: the Vienna Symphony playing under the baton of its Music Director Designate (taking up the reins in 2021), Andrés Orozco-Estrada, with soloists Regula Mühlemann, Dorottya Láng, Steve Davislim and Florian Boesch.

takt1.com/video/stream/silvester-wiener-symphoniker-orozco-estrada

The Gothenburg Concert Hall & online at GSOPlay

Hans Ek conducts Komische Musik

This particular late-October Gothenburg Symphony live stream wasn't confirmed in

time for these pages but the GSOPlay team has now put a lot of effort into its Video-On-Demand version, and given that it's not your usual sort of concert it's worth a mention: Hans Ek conducting a collaboration between the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra and neo-psychedelic Gothenburg band Fontän, also featuring the Gothenburg Symphony Vocal Ensemble, which celebrates Electronica in symphonic shape, as first pioneered by the German band, Kraftwerk, in the 1970s, and in the electronic music of the 1950s. Kraftwerk pieces are indeed on the programme, along with music by Tangerine Dream, Neu, Einstürzende Neubauten, Rammstein, Can, Ash Ra Temple, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Cluster, plus newly written music.

gso.se/en/gsoplay/video/kosmische-musik/

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How low can you go?

In an already competitive speaker market, the new Wharfedale range raises the stakes by lowering the price

Once, some years ago, the British loudspeaker market was dominated by the battle for supremacy at around the £100-a-pair mark, with the likes of KEF, Mission, Mordaunt-Short and Wharfedale – plus others fallen by the wayside or dormant – constantly striving to squeeze even more performance out of spectacularly inexpensive designs. More recently, prices have risen, to the extent that the entry-level Bowers & Wilkins model, the 607 reviewed this month, comes in at £399 a pair, and nearer £200 is about where most of the rivals start.

Wharfedale, however, has struck a nostalgic blow with the arrival of its D300 Series, the smallest of which, the D310 standmount model **1**, starts at just £159 per pair. Designed to run alongside the company's Diamond 11 Series, providing an even more affordable option to that long-running series, the D300 models lack the curved cabinet sides of the Diamonds, but still have a design with rounded corners slightly reminiscent of the Q Acoustics range, and combine soft dome tweeters with Kevlar-cone mid/bass units.

The tweeter is an in-house wide frequency response design, as already used in the Diamond 11s, and combines a powerful ceramic magnet with a copper-capped pole piece designed to control flux and reduce distortion, the mid/bass driver using a similar motor system. The tweeter is mounted in its own isolating chamber within the cabinet, while the larger driver uses a basket with a network of ribs and an open design to prevent early reflections.



The front baffle is 28mm thick to damp down resonances and add rigidity, and is profiled to reduce edge reflections, while downward-venting ports give smooth, omnidirectional airflow. The D310 and larger D320 (£199/pr) have feet to provide this port with room to breathe, while the floorstanding D330 (pictured), at £499/pr, uses a plinth. There's also a matching D300C centre speaker, at £179. The new range comes in a choice of black, white, walnut and rosewood finishes.

Denon is also strengthening its affordable offering with the launch of three new models – a CD player, network player and integrated amplifier – which form its 800NE series **2**. Selling for £349 for the DCD-800NE CD player, and £449 apiece for the DNP-800NE network player and PMA-800NE amp, the three are designed to be used together, with the remote handset for each controlling all three.

The company's HEOS multiroom app will allow the CD player and amp to be controlled via the network player. It allows the DNP-800NE to be integrated with elements of the wireless multiroom system to create whole-house audio systems. You can even operate the system using Amazon Alexa voice control. In addition, the network player will handle locally stored music in formats up to 192kHz/24 bit and DSD 2.8/5.6MHz, along with streaming services including Amazon Music, Deezer, Spotify, Tidal and TuneIn radio, and it also has both Bluetooth and AirPlay 2 wireless connectivity. Dedicated fixed and variable

analogue outputs allow it to be used as a conventional component, or directly into a power amp or active speakers.

The DCD-800NE CD player also has a USB Type A input able to play content at up to 192kHz/24 bit and DSD 2.8/5.6MHz from memory devices, while the 85Wpc PMA-800NE amplifier has four digital inputs with 192kHz/24-bit capability, a high-quality MM/MC phono stage for a turntable and four conventional analogue line inputs. Two sets of speaker outputs are provided.

A slightly larger integrated amplifier is the Parasound Halo Integrated 6 (HINT 6) **3**, which sells for £3299 and delivers 160Wpc. It has an asynchronous USB input able to handle files at up to 384kHz/32 bit and DSD256, coaxial and optical digital inputs, moving coil/moving magnet phono, and five line-ins plus one pair of balanced XLR inputs.

It provides analogue bass management, a dedicated subwoofer output and home cinema bypass, has a dedicated headphone amp built in, and even has a front panel input with extra gain for portable devices.

Finally this month, i-box has launched its Century portable **4**, which features retro radio styling to house a unit designed to stream music from online services including Amazon Music, Spotify, TuneIn, iHeart Radio and locally stored music, all voice controlled by the built-in Amazon Alexa capability, which also allows the user to access services such as news and weather information, and to control smart devices. The Century, which sells for £130, has built-in Bluetooth, and it's also possible to link eight of the units to give multiroom audio. **G**

● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Bowers & Wilkins 607

The smallest model in the revitalised 600 Series is a fine mixture of compatibility, value for money and performance

Social media is a strange thing: on the day I started work on this review of one of the newest Bowers & Wilkins models, my Facebook feed showed me a memory from the same date in 2015, when I was touring the company's Worthing factory at the launch of the 800 Series Diamond speakers. So in three years it has relaunched all three of its main speaker ranges – first the 800s, then the return of the 700s, and now the entry-level 600 line-up, which has re-emerged re-engineered and with a slimmed-down offering to give buyers a less confusing choice.

Just three models, plus a centre speaker, make up the new 600 Series, which is actually the sixth generation of this popular range, first launched in 1995. In fact, only the 800 Series has been on the Bowers & Wilkins books for longer, although that too has been much revised over the years. But the 600 range has long been the company's best seller, not to mention scooping up more than its share of plaudits and awards over the years.

It's not hard to see why, given the value for money the speakers offer – and with the improvements and sensible engineering decisions involved in the new models, it's not hard to imagine that 'new 600' could be an even greater bargain. The speaker we have here is the baby of the range, selling for £399 per pair, while next up is a larger standmount/bookshelf model, the £549/pr 606, the range topping out with the 603 floorstanding model, at £1249/pr. The HTM6 centre speaker is £399.

Immediately noticeable is that Bowers & Wilkins has moved away from the somewhat dated idea of 'fake wood' – in other words a woodgrain-effect vinyl or foil wrap on the speaker cabinets. What there is instead is still a vinyl wrap, but now available in either matt black or satin white and continued over the entire speaker, combining with the invisible magnet grille fixings to give a much more contemporary look. The three subwoofers previously offered as part of the last 600 Series have been carried over, but

Close your eyes and you might think you were listening to much larger speakers

are available in the new finishes at £399 for the ASW608, £499 for the ASW610 and £799 for the ASW610XP.

As with the 700 Series launched last year, which inherited much of the technology developed for the 800 Series Diamond range, so the new 600 models have benefited from this same 'trickle down' effect. Apart from the cleaner lines, perhaps the most noticeable aspect of the design of the 600s is the use of the Continuum Cone driver for mid/bass duties in the standmount models, and as a dedicated midrange driver in the 603. That signals the disappearance from the company's

BOWERS & WILKINS 607

Type Two-way standmount/bookshelf speaker

Price £399/pr

Drive units 25mm Decoupled Double Dome aluminium tweeter, 13cm Continuum cone mid/bass with Flowport reflex port

Sensitivity 84dB/w/m

Impedance 8 ohms nominal, 4 ohms minimum

Frequency response 52Hz – 28kHz +/-3dB

Recommended amp power 30-100W into 8 ohms

Finishes Matt black (with black grilles) or satin white (with grey grilles)

Dimensions (WxHxD) 16.5x30.0x20.7cm
bowers-wilkins.co.uk

mainstream models of what was one of their signature – and extensively copied – features, the yellow Kevlar weave drivers.

While Kevlar still has its appeal, due to its lightness and rigidity – and I've even seen really cheap speakers with paper cones printed with a yellow mesh effect to suggest those qualities! – the new Continuum Cone, which is an in-house Bowers & Wilkins development, offers even smoother, more precise motion in response to an incoming signal. And for



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now the company is still keeping the details of the driver close to its chest, to the extent that the cones are made in the Worthing factory, and then shipped to the Bowers & Wilkins plant in China where the 600 Series models are made.

In the 607 here the woofer is a 13cm unit, while the larger 606 gets a 16.5cm driver. The 603 gets a 15cm version for the midrange, this one also using the company's 'surroundless' FST design, supported by a pair of 16.5cm bass drivers. All three models use the company's 'golf ball dimpled' Flowports for bass tuning, and in the two standmount models this has been relocated to the rear of the enclosure, both enhancing the clean looks and allowing the 607 to be a little more compact than the model it replaces. The port assembly also incorporates the terminals for the speaker cables, which are inset into the cabinet for greater integrity (and easier wall-mounting of the 607).

All three 600 models share a version of the company's 25mm Decoupled Double Dome tweeter, again derived from the 800 Series via the 700 Series: this uses an ultra-light dome strengthened with a ring around its edge for greater rigidity. In the flagship model this is made from a diamond material; in the 700s it's carbon; and here it's aluminium, with an improved heat-dissipation system for improved power-handling and consistency.

PERFORMANCE

The 607 has been designed as a true bookshelf design – in which that diminished stature is handy – as well as a standmounter. It's just 30cm tall, and can be used with the company's dedicated STAV24 stands, which sell for £99/pr: I tried it on both shelves and my elderly (and very heavy) Atacama SE24 stands to good effect, and was consistently surprised by the weight and dynamics available from a speaker so small. As usual with Bowers & Wilkins speakers, two-part bungs are supplied to tame the bass if it booms with the speakers close to a wall, but even with them 20cm or so out there was no need: the bass remains tight and tuneful even with large-scale orchestral music.

I tried a variety of amplifiers, from the relatively inexpensive Pioneer A-40AE

through to a heavyweight NAD Masters M32, and while the latter is probably overkill, it did show just what the little 607s could do. However, even with more modest amplification, and despite modest 'on paper' sensitivity of 84dB/W/m, the speakers show they're rather special, with good bass extension and resolution for their size allied to excellent focus and imaging: in fact, the way these little boxes conjure up a the sense of an orchestra before the listener is really quite excellent.

They may not defy the size of the listening room by seeming to push out the walls as could some bigger speakers, but the way they image the musical performances before you, as well as creating a soundstage image seemingly stretching back beyond the plane of the speakers, is extremely impressive. With a little toe-in towards the listening position the image can be 'focused' and, with that done, the sound is strikingly three-dimensional.

Whether with the 'spotlit' effect of solo/accompanied instrumental or vocal recordings, or the complexities of everything from chamber to orchestral sets, the 607s defy expectations simply by sounding entirely enjoyable. For listeners in small to medium-sized rooms, who don't feel the need to wind up the volume to 'physical impact' levels – the kind at which you feel your sofa, or your chest, resonating with the bass – they will be way beyond adequate.

With Katia & Marielle Labèque's 'Amoria' set, the 607s do a lovely job of capturing the percussive sound of the fort pianos, what little they lack in absolute weight more than covered by the overall warmth of their sound, but still with fine openness and space in the midband and treble to convey the recorded acoustic. They're also persuasive with all the scale of the Barenboim Staatskapelle Berlin Brahms symphonies, again doing that great job of covering their tracks while making the fourth movement of the First sound majestic and powerful.

Close your eyes and you might think you were listening to much larger speakers, and ones of very high quality, too: that the smallest 600s can do that not only bodes well for the rest of the series, but also makes them something of a conspicuous bargain. **G**

Or you could try...

As has long been the case, the bookshelf/standmount speaker market is hardly underpopulated – hardly a surprise, as these designs are popular with everyone from students building first systems to those looking for high-quality sound for small spaces.

Q Acoustics Q 3010i speakers

You could start your search as low as £199 a pair for the curvaceous Q Acoustics Q 3010i speakers, but the pick of the range is probably the slightly larger Q 3020i model, at £249/pr: it will deliver more bass and an overall bigger sound, but still with the same refinement and clarity. For more information, see qacoustics.co.uk



Monitor Audio Bronze 2

At £279/pr, the Monitor Audio Bronze 2 is the latest version of a long-running success story, using the company's famous anodised metal/ceramic drivers for plenty of excitement without sacrificing clarity. Find out more at monitordaudio.com



KEF LS50

The striking looks of the KEF LS50 speakers make a virtue of the company's famous UniQ technology; what looks like a single driver is actually a tweeter in the centre of a mid/bass unit, giving these unusual £799/pr models impressive imaging and resolution – plus some striking colourways! Details at kef.com



Bowers & Wilkins 705 S2

Finally, if you fancy serious luxury but want to keep your speakers small, look no further than the £1799/pr Bowers & Wilkins 705 S2, which combines the Continuum cone mid/bass driver with a solid body 'tweeter-on-top' design derived from the 800 Series Diamond range, for an ultra-precise sound. Details again at bowers-wilkins.co.uk



● REVIEW PRO-JECT STREAM BOX S2 ULTRA

Small but mighty

Tiny, simple-looking yet fiendishly capable, and at an affordable price, the Austrian-based company's streaming 'transport' is an intriguing buy

One of the things we have learned from the growing influence of 'computer music' is everything we thought we knew is probably wrong. These days music can be accessed using a touchscreen, an entire library can be at our fingertips, and we don't even have to build up a collection if we don't want to – instead we can stream all our listening from an online service for a monthly fee.

The other discovery is that, when your music is coming from a computer source, you don't need to conform to the standard size of hi-fi components: the circuitry involved is very small, especially with the large-scale integration of functions onto chips, and so products can shrink down beyond the 43cm wide norm. We've seen that in the use of devices such as the Raspberry Pi and Asus Tinkerbox DIY computers as digital music sources, and now Pro-Ject has taken that thinking to create a more user-friendly solution, requiring none of the set-up and tweaking involved in building your own audio computer.

The Pro-Ject Stream Box S2 Ultra has a model designation that's almost larger than the unit itself, but then this streaming device is just 10.5cm wide and deep, and stands a little under 4cm tall. If it was any smaller, the manufacturer might have struggled to fit in all the connectivity on offer, for the tiny box can play network-stored and online-streamed music via Wi-Fi and Ethernet, has built-in Bluetooth for wireless music streaming from portable devices, plus Shairport-enabled AirPlay, and also has a range of USB ports to allow it to accept audio from computers and memory devices.

The Stream Box S2 Ultra costs £599 and is the result of a joint development between the company and celebrated digital audio designer John Westlake. Yes, it's based around a Raspberry Pi motherboard, but this is the latest '3' iteration in its latest 'industrialised' form, which you can also find lurking in several other audio products these days. It also uses the open-source Volumio audiophile music player at its heart, but beyond that has been optimised with particular attention paid to sound-critical areas such as power supplies and isolation of the connections, blocking noise.

There are three USB inputs on the Stream Box S2 Ultra: two USB-As for memory devices, and a MicroUSB for connection to a computer, as used by other manufacturers' compact DACs. Except the Pro-Ject isn't a DAC, having no digital-to-analogue conversion built-in: instead it's a network bridge/digital transport, to which you'll need to connect a DAC via the USB output provided. Subject to the DAC in use, the Stream Box S2 Ultra will also handle a wide range of file formats, all the way up to 384kHz/24bit and DSD256, and can be set to upsample files to 768kHz/32bit before output.

The Stream Box S2 Ultra offers a USB output that's electrically cleaned to remove noise and tidy up clocking, or 'detoxed' as the company describes it, and as a side effect can also be used between a computer and a DAC to clean up a USB connection. In addition to that and its network streaming ability, it will also support internet radio, Spotify and Tidal, can be combined with other units to create a multiroom system, and is able to work as a Roon endpoint.

There's no display on the Pro-Ject, so it's operated using a web interface on a computer or portable device connected to the same network, or via the Pro-Ject Play app, apparently available for iOS and Android – I say 'apparently' as, at the time of writing, I was unable to find the app in the iOS app store, so used the Android version. However, the Pro-Ject can also be 'driven' using the Volumio iOS app, which is unsurprisingly identical save for the lack of Pro-Ject branding.

Power for the Stream Box S2 Ultra is from an offboard plug-top supply, and the physical controls here are as simple as you can get: a front panel pushbutton for power/standby, with a blue/red LED indicator, and another to switch between normal use and 'bypass' operation as a USB cleaner for an external computer. This last function is duplicated on the control app and web interface, which also allows the set-up of the little box, control of network connections, firmware updates and the like.

PERFORMANCE

As with all 'network' bridge devices, it's hard to comment on the sound of the Pro-Ject, simply because it doesn't have



PRO-JECT STREAM BOX S2 ULTRA

Type Network Bridge

Price £599

Inputs USB-A x 2, asynchronous MicroUSB, Ethernet, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, AirPlay

Streaming services Spotify, Tidal

Outputs USB-A to DAC, HDMI for external display

Formats handled PCM to 384kHz/24bit, DSD to DSD256/11.2MHz

Control via Pro-Ject Play/Volumio apps on iOS/Android, or web browser

Dimensions (WxHxD) 10.5x3.7x10.5cm
project-audio.com

UK distributor **henleyaudio.co.uk**

the most common audio-influencing components – a DAC and analogue outputs. What can be said is that, in its 'sidebar' mode as a USB 'detoxer', it does give a sound that's just a little crisper and clearer when compared with a worst case computer – a laptop running on its power supply – connected straight into a DAC. Whether it's the removal of electrical noise on the digital line or the reclocking going on, the sound has just a shade more bite to it, and yet is also easier to enjoy.

With the little box set-up and Spotify and Tidal accounts logged in via the control interface, the Pro-Ject is exceptionally simple to use. I tried it with DACs including the DragonFly Black and Meridian Explorer2, as well as into digital inputs on a variety of amplifiers, and in each case it proved an efficient way of accessing both network and online audio sources, and sounded extremely good indeed.

With the unit being Raspberry Pi based, you could actually load it with your operating system of choice if you were confident enough, although this isn't something I'd suggest unless you know what you're doing. After all, the Pro-Ject is flexible enough as it is, with the potential for the company to add more functionality and improvements via future firmware updates; add that to the price and the tiny size, and this is a highly appealing little unit. **G**

● ESSAY

A year of change – or was it?

Some will have you believe that the whole world of music listening has tilted on its axis with the rise of streaming, but the hi-fi industry continues to support choice



As is usual at this time of year, I've been looking back over another year of audio reviewing in these pages, and recalling some of the highlights and trends of the past 12 months. And the same questions still keep being asked, not least whether the rise of streaming services means the end of hi-fi as we know it, or how the audio industry can lure buyers back to owning high-quality systems on which to enjoy their music – yes, that question's still going around, and still doesn't seem to have found a solution.

As if I could put these questions aside, I'm reminded of them every time I visit a friend who has two teenage children, and see – or rather hear, from somewhere upstairs! – how they are listening to their music. Their phones are the heart of their listening experience, connected to a speaker using Bluetooth, with occasional forays into the free music on offer via Alexa and streaming services. Pay for music? Don't think so.

Against that backdrop, where music has no price and thus no value, you'd think the answer to the 'how to win them over' question would be a simple one: provide better, or at least louder, hi-fi systems through which music could be Bluetoothed – and yes, it is a verb, I'm told. But it's not quite that simple, given that two of my acquaintances seem quite happy to listen on the speakers in their phones, or using pocketable Bluetooth speaker solutions.

That's not to say that hi-fi companies aren't trying hard, as we've seen in the rise of products and systems designed to take this generation beyond that simple way of listening. Right back at the beginning of 2018 I tried out the excellent Onkyo DP-S1, a dedicated pocket music player no larger than a mobile phone, and yet capable of a very high standard of playback, all the way up into ultra-high-resolution file formats. That was very impressive, as was the excellent Astell &

Kern ACRO L1000 desktop amplifier I reviewed in the May issue **1** – just one of a growing number of DAC/amplifiers designed for personal listening: another is the superb, and very high-flying iFi Audio Pro iDSD featured in the October issue, which is truly state of the art and offers more than almost any music enthusiast could ever want or need.

But I have to say I was even more amused by the little Shanling m0 player **2** I encountered during the summer, and which was reviewed in the Awards issue. This truly tiny player, not much larger than one of Apple's watches, plays music all the way up to multi-DSD formats, has a simple touchscreen interface, has done a decent job of driving all the headphones with which I've tried it – and will leave you change from £100. It even fits into the little case containing my Snugs in-ear headphones, meaning it's always in my carry-on bag when I travel these days.

The big hi-fi names continue to find ways to help those wanting to embrace streaming services

Of course, the big hi-fi names continue to find ways to help those wanting to embrace the new world of online streaming services without abandoning their existing disc collections: it can be done by adding a dedicated network player to your system, but a range of players, including the Arcam CDS50 I reviewed in the October issue, combine disc playback with streaming capability in one unit, thus keeping the box-count down. Similarly the Naim UnitiStar **3**, reviewed in May, brings together streaming and discs thanks to a built-in CD drive, which can either play discs or rip them to attached storage, at which point this all-in-one 'just add

speakers' system can act as a server for other Naim units around the house.

Two more standouts in this arena in 2018 came in the form of the heavyweight Pioneer PD-70AE reviewed in September, which is a superb CD/SACD/network machine harking back to the company's 'battleship' CD players of old, and the Marantz ND8006 **4**, offering broadly similar capability. The latter company describes its player, which featured in June, as 'The Complete Digital Music Source Player', and while admittedly it lacks the SACD capability of its Pioneer rival, it's not much more than half the price, and lives up to its billing with a very broad range of capabilities, thanks to technology trickled down from the breathtaking Marantz SA-10 flagship player.

Talking of trickling down, much of the design of the range-topping Bowers & Wilkins 800 Series Diamond speakers has now found its way through to the latest generation of the entry-level 600 Series, and the little 607 speakers, reviewed on page 150, bode well for the rest of this range, even if the slimmed down line-up does show some rationalisation is going on in catalogues once bristling with a huge number of variations on any particular theme. And of course I greatly enjoyed the Iota Xplorer speakers from British company Neat **5**, which has taken its tiny Iota desktop speakers and gradually upscaled them to some very impressive floorstanding designs. Yes, they look very unusual with their mid and treble drivers mounted in a sloping baffle atop a column containing the main bass drivers, but they deserve to be heard.

And finally, one sad note this year was the passing of the Technics Tracks music download store, launched by the company when it returned to the hi-fi fray a few years back. The reason? It's that streaming thing again ... **G**

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repertoire, the
venues... all perfect
in my opinion!'**

Martin Randall Festival participant in 2017

Photo: Gabrieli, performing at 'Music
in the Cotswolds' 2018, ©Bill Knight.

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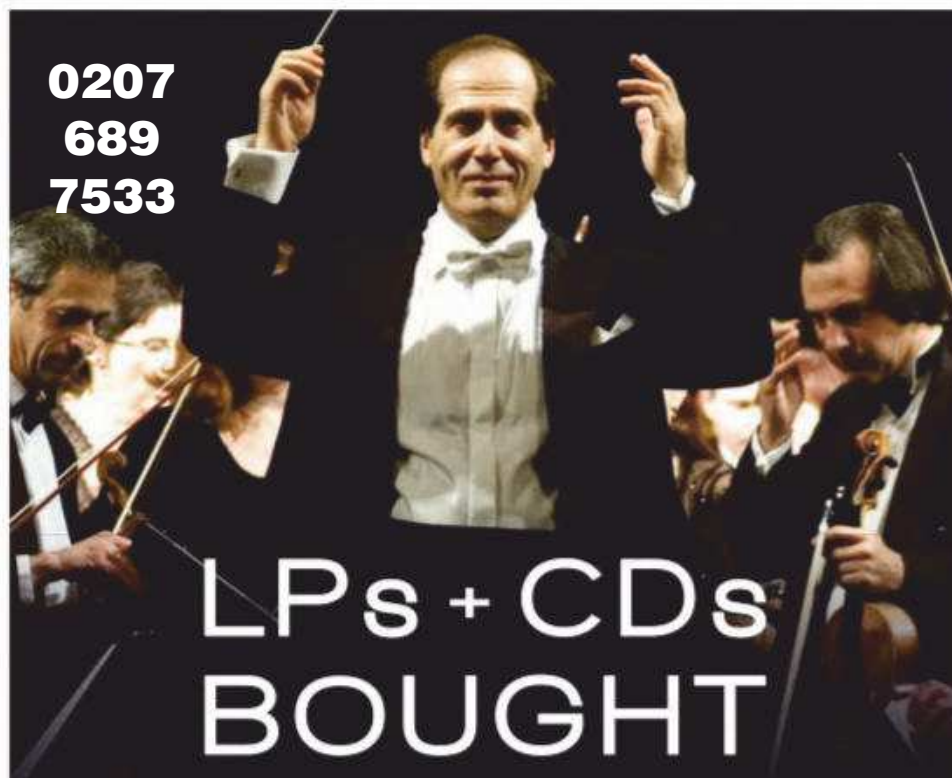


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NOTES & LETTERS

Rachmaninov lets his hair down • George Szell 'the machine' • Neeme Järvi's Scottish tenure

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Rachmaninov's jazz

After listening to the marvellous new issue by Marston of 'Rachmaninoff plays *Symphonic Dances*' and reading Rob Cowan's perceptive review (October, page 108) I was reminded of an anecdote included in *Music Face to Face* by Antony Hopkins and André Previn. Hopkins relates how one of his friends was in a nightclub in New York one night and at around 3am, the band decided that they had had enough and went home. The place was practically deserted when suddenly she heard from the piano the most marvellous sweet jazz, played with wonderful luxuriant richness of harmony. The very few customers who remained became absolutely hushed as they listened to this; they realised it was someone quite exceptional. Only when she went over to have a look to see who was playing, did she realise it was Rachmaninov, who had sat down at the piano and was playing for his own pleasure.

Paul Chennell, via email

George Szell's 'perfectionism'

In his recent survey of the release of the 'Complete Columbia Collection' of recordings by George Szell, Richard Osborne refers on several occasions to Szell's 'flawless' execution of the scores and the undoubted technical brilliance of his Cleveland players. I have known Szell's recordings, including his Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schumann, for about 50 years, and I saw him conduct at the Royal Festival Hall in the late 1960s. While I appreciate the many qualities of Szell as a conductor, I have always had my reservations. For me, at least, his recordings lack a certain degree of warmth and humanity. Otto Klemperer, who, famously, was capable of biting sarcasm in relation to his fellow conductors, referred to Szell as a 'very good machine'. Richard Osborne notes that some musicians were in fear of Szell (as they were of Fritz Reiner) and it may be that element in his disposition and character that comes through to me as a deficiency of warmth. Pierre Boulez was a great admirer of the scale of Szell's technical achievements at Cleveland, and once remarked to Pierre Monteux that on that basis alone Szell should be regarded as a very fine conductor. Monteux's reply

Letter of the Month

Neeme Järvi north of the border

Gramophone's Lifetime Achievement Award-winner, Neeme Järvi's years with the Scottish National Orchestra (1984-88) were by common consent a golden age in Scotland's cultural history, wonderfully supported and brought to international attention by the young Chandos recording company. Citizens of Glasgow like me were constantly thrilled by the maestro's incandescence and inspirational direction of



Neeme Järvi: success in Scotland

the SNO. Specially memorable was his concert performance of Shostakovich's Fourth Symphony, soon recorded and joined by equally fine versions of Nos 1 and 5-10 on Chandos. Järvi was famous for his furious finales, as in Shostakovich's Sixth. A Glasgow promenade performance of Tchaikovsky's Fourth got similar treatment in a concert that also featured John Ogdon in the Gershwin Piano Concerto, apparently playing from sight.

One late Saturday night as I browsed in Tower Records, Glasgow (long gone), I spotted a lonely figure on the quiet classical floor also exploring the racks. It was Järvi. Nervously approaching, I told him I planned next day to travel to hear him in Edinburgh lead the SNO in a programme of Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra and Khachaturian's *Bell Symphony* (No 2).

This latter was often

the target of critics' contempt as a work whose 'musical quality was in inverse proportion to its noise' (*Penguin Guide*). Järvi's terse reply to me was 'A nice piece!' No fashionable critical snootiness from him! He then signed the CD I had hastily just bought of his Shostakovich Eleventh (on DG). Out I scurried into the night, on top of the world. Next day's concert in the Usher Hall was predictably fantastic.

Stuart J Mitchell,
Glasgow, Scotland

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was perceptive: 'Of course, it takes a very good conductor to make an orchestra play that well, but it takes an even better one to make them *want* to play that well.'

Keith Pearce
Penzance, Cornwall

Bach on the Moog

In his excellent review of Bach performance practice (October, page 14), Nicholas Kenyon touches momentarily on Bach entering 'the mainstream' by way of the Moog synthesiser. He must here be referring to the painstakingly crafted note-for-note realisations of Walter Carlos in 'Switched-On Bach'.

On this album, and in particular in the Third *Brandenburg Concerto*, the rhythmic impulses of Bach's dance were laid out for a plethora of electronically contrived voices, great fun and with the sonic palette running the full gamut of styles from filigree to bombast and back again. To a teenager engaging with the synthesized prog rock of Emerson, Lake and Palmer, this was a step up from that group's cod-classics and an entry into the higher echelons of art.

Barry Borman, via email

Editorial note

The photograph of the organ on which

Helmut Walcha recorded his Bach organ works for DG Archiv (October, page 17) is not, as captioned, the instrument in the

Jacobskirche in Lübeck, but the Schnitger instrument (restored by Jürgen Ahrend) in Hamburg's Sankt Jacobi.

OBITUARIES

A long-serving Gramophone reviewer and a multi-talented musician

IVAN MARCH

Gramophone reviewer
Born April 5, 1928
Died November 1, 2018



Ivan March, who reviewed for *Gramophone* for four decades, has died aged 90. Readers – both of *Gramophone* and of the long-running *Penguin*

Guides – will remember IM (as he appeared in our pages) as a generous-spirited and expertly informed critic whose advocacy of releases was born of a life-long passion for music and recording.

In a profile in our pages in 1995, Ivan credited being taken to see Walt Disney's *Fantasia*, aged 13, as a life-changing moment. Beethoven and Tchaikovsky soon became a passion: Ivan recalled that such was the low esteem that the latter composer was held in by 1940s' tastes that he was frequently assured he would 'grow out of it' – he thankfully never did. He soon became a record collector.

Around this time Ivan wrote to Sir Adrian Boult asking his advice about how to become a conductor – Boult's reply was to 'take up an orchestral instrument, alongside the piano and get into a college of music'. Ivan chose the French horn. National Service was spent playing in the RAF Central Band. He received a scholarship to London's Guildhall School of Music, which was transferred to the Royal Manchester College of Music when his band was transferred to north-west England. He later toured with the D'Oyly Carte and Carl Rosa Opera orchestras and spent a year with the BBC Scottish Orchestra.

In 1954 Ivan founded the Long Playing Record Library, and in the 1960s became a consultant when public libraries started to set up their own loan collections of LPs. This knowledge and advice soon found its way into print, when he launched *The Stereo Record Guide*, written with Edward Greenfield and Denis Stevens (who was succeeded by Robert Layton). This was followed in the 1970s by *The Penguin Stereo Record Guide*, which became *The Penguin Guide to Compact Discs*.

It was in 1973 that Ivan started writing for *Gramophone*'s sister magazine *Cassettes and Cartridges*, before, when that ceased publication in 1977, writing a column in *Gramophone* itself called 'Cassette Commentary'. This in turn evolved into 'Collectors' Corner', with a particular focus on reissues of older recordings.

Over the following decades Ivan contributed an extraordinary number of reviews for *Gramophone*'s pages, spanning a considerable breadth of repertoire. Throughout them all, however, a constant thread remained his astute reflection on a release's sound quality. In this, as in so much else in his life, Ivan was a much-liked figure dedicated to exploring, celebrating and sharing with as many people as possible the glorious art of recording.

MURRAY KHOURI

Clarinetist and founder of Continuum
Born April 8, 1941
Died October 27, 2018



The New Zealand-born Murray Khouri had a dual career in classical music: as a clarinetist, with an interest in new music, and as the founder of Continuum, a label that won a *Gramophone* Historic Award in 1991 for the restoration of a recording from May 1935 of Alban Berg's Violin Concerto played by Louis Krasner with Anton Webern conducting the BBC SO.

After study at the RCM with Bernard Walton, Khouri played in many of the UK's leading ensembles, including the D'Oyly Carte company, Royal Ballet Orchestra and (after a brief return to New Zealand) the BBC SO, Philharmonia and RPO. In 1975 he emigrated to Australia where he was involved in the formation of the Australian Contemporary Music Ensemble and the Australia Ensemble.

He founded Continuum in the late 1980s and issued many notable recordings including a set of Bax's music for clarinet with John McCabe at the piano. He also produced many recordings of light music, planned with his friend Ernest Tomlinson, for Marco Polo (later Naxos).

NEXT MONTH JANUARY 2019



The leading young pianists

Today's generation of young pianists boasts some extraordinarily gifted musicians – we discuss what unites them in terms of style and approach, and where their influences lie

Beethoven's 'Waldstein' Sonata

Next month's Collection explores one of the pillars of middle-period Beethoven, and recommends the best recordings of this great piano sonata

Kirill Karabits

The conductor is marking 10 years at the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra: we talk about his projects and plans

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Debussy. Fauré. Ravel Pf Wks (r1938-30). <i>Gaillard, M-F/Guilbert.</i>	② ② ⑥ APR6025

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Stradella Doriclea. <i>Pomo d'Oro/De Carlo.</i>	⑆ ③ A454
ARCO DIVA	<i>arcodiva.cz/en/</i>
Various Cpsrs Hpd Wks. <i>Hroch.</i>	⑆ UPO207
ARTE VERUM	<i>arteverum.com</i>
Various Cpsrs Road to Freedom. <i>Hendricks/Blues Band.</i>	⑆ ARV015

ARTHAUS MUSIK	
Strasnoy Luther – An Oratorio. <i>Sols/Halle Staatskapelle/Wendeberg.</i>	⑆ 109 349

ATMA CLASSIQUE	<i>atmaclassique.com</i>
Lorenzani Nicandro e Fileno. <i>Nouvel Opéra/Boréades/Colpron.</i>	⑆ ACD2 2770

Offenbach. Poulenc. Ravel Gaîté Parisienne – Orch Wks. <i>Quebec SO/Gabel.</i>	⑆ ACD2 2757
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AUDITE	<i>audite.de</i>
Bartók. Prokofiev. Ysaÿe Solo Vn Wks. <i>Pietsch.</i>	⑆ AUDITE97 758

Schumann Cpte Sym Wks. <i>Sols/WDR SO, Cologne/Holliger.</i>	② ④ ⑥ AUSITE21 450
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AURORA	<i>aurorarecordingcompany.com</i>
Habbestad. Kruse. Samkopf Akrostikon. <i>Vox Clamantis/Norwegian Rad Orch/Birkela.</i>	⑆ ACD5091

AVIE	<i>avie-records.com</i>
Various Cpsrs Christmas on Sugarloaf Mountain. <i>Apollo's Fire/Sorrell.</i>	⑆ AV2396

BERLIN CLASSICS	<i>edel.com</i>
Brahms Pf Pieces, Opp 10, 76 & 117. <i>Müller.</i>	⑆ 0301155BC
Helbig Tres Momentos. <i>Helbig.</i>	⑆ ① 0301134NM
Marhulets Liliith's Lullabies. <i>Marhulets.</i>	⑆ 0301145NM
Rachmaninov Preludes. <i>Huangci.</i>	⑆ 0301075BC
Various Cpsrs Family Songbook. <i>Scholl/Halperin.</i>	⑆ 0301167BC
Various Cpsrs Kind of Gold – Wks for Tpts. <i>Höfs/Enss.</i>	⑆ 0301129BC

BIS	<i>bis.se</i>
Bach, JS. Pärt Fratres. <i>Van Rijen/Camerata RCO.</i>	⑆ 📀 BIS2316
Dusapin Concertante Wks. <i>Hodges/Widmann, C/Petrinsky/Pays de la Loire Nat Orch/Rophé.</i>	⑆ 📀 BIS2262
Schubert Arrs for Vn & Gtr. <i>Migdal/Kellermann.</i>	⑆ 📀 BIS2375
Various Cpsrs Mantra – Wks for Sinfonietta. <i>Aalberg/Trondheim Sinfonietta/Myrann.</i>	⑆ 📀 BIS2340
Various Cpsrs Spring Will Come. <i>Helsinki Chbr Ch/Schweckendiek.</i>	⑆ BIS2442

BRILLIANT CLASSICS	<i>brilliantclassics.com</i>
Bach family Cpte Org Wks. <i>Molardi/Scandali/Turri.</i>	⑤ (24 discs) 95803
Baermann, H & C Cl Sons. <i>Zingales/Podgoreanu.</i>	⑓ 95785
Bazzini Cpte Op Transcrs. <i>Caraman/Trebesch.</i>	⑤ ⑥ 95674
Boismortier Wks for Fl, Va da gamba & Basso continuo. <i>Umbra Lucis Ens/Bagliano.</i>	⑓ 95754
Cimarosa Impresario in angustie. <i>Sols/Orch Bruno Maderna, Forli/Salvagno.</i>	⑓ 95746

Colombano Psalms for Six Voices. <i>Cappella Musicale of Vercelli Cath/Silano.</i>	⑓ 95839
Debussy Méloides. <i>Windsor/Ballista.</i>	⑤ ② 95741
Dussek Cpte Pf Sons, Vol 4. <i>Hakkila.</i>	⑓ 95604
Hindemith Four Solo Va Sons. <i>Ranieri.</i>	⑓ 95413
Loevendie Wks with Rec. <i>Bosgraaf/Holland Baroque.</i>	⑓ 95906
Khachaturian, A & K Wks for Vn & Pf. <i>Kosemyan/Mnatsakanyan.</i>	⑆ 95357

Menotti Medium. Telephone. <i>Sols/Orch Italiana Philh/Scogna.</i>	⑤ ② 95361
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CENTAUR	<i>centaurrecords.com</i>
Boismortier Sonatas, Cantatas & Suites. <i>Arcanum Ens/Boutte.</i>	⑆ CRC3548
Krein. Weinberg Pf Wks. <i>Seifetdinova.</i>	⑆ CRC3595
Mozart Sons for Fl & Pf. <i>Talmi, E & Y/Lev.</i>	⑆ CRC3579

CHALLENGE CLASSICS	<i>challenge.nl</i>
Dohnányi Pf Wks. <i>Toth.</i>	⑆ CC72775
Schubert Syms Nos 2 & 4. <i>The Hague Residentie Orch/de Vriend.</i>	⑆ 📀 CC72739
CHANNEL CLASSICS	<i>channelclassics.com</i>
Elgar. Finzi Vn Concs. <i>Feng/RLPO/Prieto.</i>	⑆ CCS40218
Vivaldi Four Seasons. <i>Podger/Brecon Baroque.</i>	⑆ ① ⑥ CCSLP6918

CLAUDIO	<i>claudiorecords.com</i>
Berezovsky, M Ukrainian Sacred Wks, Vol 1. <i>Vidrodzhennya Chbr Ch/Yurchenko.</i>	⑆ CB4730-2
CLUB INÉGALES	
Various Cpsrs Van Diemen's Land. <i>Lee/Notes Inégales/Wiegold.</i>	⑆ CI003

CONTINUO CLASSICS	<i>continuoclassics.vpweb.fr</i>
Brahms Cpte Wks for Pf Trio. <i>Mourja/Groben/Laul.</i>	⑓ ② CC777 728/9
Various Cpsrs Concert d'amour – Baroque Concs & Sons. <i>Foulon/Nouhaud, J-P & M/Waters.</i>	⑆ CC777 811

CPO	<i>jpc.de/jpcng/cpo/home</i>
Bach, JS Kunst der Fuge. <i>Berlin Sax Qt.</i>	⑆ ② ① ⑥ CPO555 162-1
Bargiel Cpte Stg Qts. Stg Octet. <i>Orpheus Qt/Sato/Horie/Adler/Freitag.</i>	⑆ ② CPO555 095-2
Graupner Solo & Dialogue Cantatas. <i>Werneburg/Wörner/Kirchheim Bach Consort/Lutz.</i>	⑆ ② CPO555 215-2
Herzogenberg Columbus. <i>Sols/Graz PO/Kaftan.</i>	⑆ ② CPO555 178-2

Papandopulo Concs. Songs. <i>Kofler/Halubek/Turk/SW German CO, Pforzheim/Handschuh.</i>	⑆ CP0777 941-2
Ries Stg Qts, Vol 3. <i>Schuppanzigh Qt.</i>	⑆ CP0777 305-2
Telemann Moral Cantatas. <i>Schachtner/Hamburg Ratsmusik/Eckert.</i>	⑆ CPO555 141-2
Various Cpsrs Mandolin & Fortepiano. <i>Torge/Hambitzer.</i>	⑆ CPO555 112-2

CRYSTAL RECORDS	<i>crystalrecords.com</i>
Various Cpsrs Brass Roots – Wks for Brass Qnt. <i>Los Angeles Brass Qnt/Los Angeles Perc Ens.</i>	⑆ CD109
Various Cpsrs Wks for Brass Qnt (r1967). <i>Los Angeles Brass Qnt.</i>	⑆ ⑥ CD102

CYBELE	<i>cybele.de</i>
Blarr Jesus-Passion (pp2018). <i>Sols/Chors/Wiesbaden Bach Orch/Endebrock.</i>	⑓ ③ 📀 CYBELE3SACDKIG010
CYPRES	<i>cypres-records.com</i>
Dessy Requiems. <i>Estonian Philh Chbr Ch/Joost.</i>	⑆ CYP4652
Marechal Âme du voyage. <i>OST.</i>	⑆ CYP0611
Various Cpsrs Ear of Theodoor Van Loon, il primo Caravaggisto fiammingo. <i>Huelgas Ens/Van Nevel.</i>	⑆ CYP1679

DACAPO	<i>dacapo-records.dk</i>
Olsen Planets. <i>Various artists.</i>	⑆ 8 226128
DB PRODUCTIONS	<i>db-productions.se</i>
Mendelssohn Sym No 5. <i>Västerås Sinfonietta/Crawford-Phillips.</i>	⑆ DBCD187
Various Cpsrs Melancholy Dreams. <i>Falk, M & I/Gross/Karlberg.</i>	⑆ DBCD186

DELOS	<i>delosmusic.com</i>
Brahms Hungarian Dances. <i>Höpcker/Bidini.</i>	⑆ DE3558
Various Cpsrs A te, o cara – Bel canto Arias. <i>Costello/Kaunas City SO/Orbelian.</i>	⑆ DE3541
DELPHIAN	<i>delphianrecords.co.uk</i>
Holloway Lovers' Well. <i>Sols/Rushton/Vann.</i>	⑆ DCD34216
DEUX-ELLES	<i>deux-elles.co.uk</i>
Beethoven Pf Sons, Vol 7. <i>Roscoe.</i>	⑆ DXL1167
Brahms Vc Sons. Pf Pieces, Op 76. <i>Wadsworth/Yang.</i>	⑆ DXL1181
DIVOX	<i>divox.com</i>
Haydn Stg Qts, Op 50. <i>Amati Qt.</i>	② ② CDX21801
DOREMI	<i>doremi.com</i>
Paganini Solo Vn Caprices (r c1973). <i>Erlih.</i>	⑓ ② DHR8071/2

DRAMA MUSICA	<i>drama-musica.com</i>
Giuliani. Sor Ombre amene – Wks for Sop & Gtr. <i>Di Laccio/Akers.</i>	⑆ DRAMA002
Handel. Vivaldi Bravura – Arias. <i>Di Laccio/Musica Antiqua Clio/Cordella.</i>	⑆ DRAMA001
Various Cpsrs Afluências: Brazilian Wks for Vn & Vc. <i>Bujes/Huff.</i>	⑆ DRAMA003

Various Cpsrs Donne e la chitarra: Gtr Wks by 19th-Century Women Cpsrs. <i>Akers.</i>	⑆ DRAMA004
Various Cpsrs Homage: Women Cpsrs from Italy & Brazil. <i>Georgiadis/Sensale.</i>	⑆ DRAMA005

DYNAMIC	<i>dynamic.it</i>
Moretti Solo Gtr Wks. <i>Fantoni.</i>	⑆ CDS7828
Verdi Lombardi (pp2018). <i>Sols/Regio Th, Turin/Mariotti.</i>	⑆ ② CDS7826

Various Cpsrs Artemisia Gentileschi & the Music of her Time. <i>Frigato/Accademia d'Arcadia/Rossi Lürig.</i>	⑆ CDS7829
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ETCETERA	<i>etcetera-records.com</i>
Mozart Basset Cl Conc. Concert Arias. <i>Dutilleul/Terra Nova Collective/Weverbergh.</i>	⑆ KTC1627

FUGA LIBERA	<i>outhere-music.com/fugalibera</i>
Constant Impressions de Pelléas Debussy Wks for Two Pfs. <i>Binon/Saelens.</i>	⑆ ② FUG610
Piazzolla. Sabatier Piaf – Piazzolla. <i>Sabatier/Terpsycordes Qt.</i>	⑆ FUG609

GRAMOLA	<i>gramola.at</i>
Eröd Stg Qts. <i>Accord Qt.</i>	⑆ 99157
Schubert Syms Nos 1 & 8. <i>KlangKollektiv Wien/Ballot.</i>	⑆ 📀 99180

HARMONIA MUNDI	<i>harmoniamundi.com</i>
Debussy Études. <i>Muraro.</i>	⑆ HMM90 5304
Debussy Préludes, Book 1. <i>Perianes.</i>	⑆ HMM90 2301
Various Cpsrs Bal des animaux. <i>Karthäuser.</i>	⑆ HMM90 2260

HORTUS	<i>editionshortus.com</i>
Various Cpsrs Musicians & the Great War, Vol 18. <i>Duo Contraste.</i>	⑆ HORTUS718

Various Cpsrs Musicians & the Great War, Vol 17. <i>Ens Calliopée/Lethiec.</i>	⑆ HORTUS717
Various Cpsrs Musicians & the Great War, Vol 16. <i>Masset/Le Bozec.</i>	⑆ HORTUS716
Various Cpsrs Musicians & the Great War, Vol 20. <i>Ribouillault.</i>	⑆ HORTUS720

Various Cpsrs Musicians & the Great War, Vol 19. <i>Wanhauwaert.</i>	⑆ HORTUS719
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HUDDERSFIELD CONTEMPORARY	<i>hud.ac.uk/hcrl/</i>
Adkins. Bellamy. Harrison, B Bozzini+ – Chbr Wks. <i>Bozzini Qt/Thomas, P/Summers, S-J.</i>	ⓕ ② HCR19CD
HYPERION	<i>hyperion-records.co.uk</i>
Brahms Late Pf Wks. <i>Ohlsson.</i>	ⓕ CDA68226
Cardoso Requiem. <i>Cupertinos/Toscano.</i>	ⓕ CDA68252
Bridge Vc Son Clarke, R Va Son. <i>Clein/Hadland.</i>	ⓕ CDA68253
Saint-Saëns Sym No 3. <i>Utah SO/Fischer, T.</i>	ⓕ CDA68201
KAIROS	<i>kairos-music.com</i>
Andreyev Music with no Edges. <i>HANATSumiroir.</i>	ⓕ 0015025KAI
Billone Om On. <i>Deutsch/Pauwels.</i>	ⓕ 0015057KAI
Crumb Makrokosmos, Vols 1-3. <i>Shimizu/Struber.</i>	ⓕ 0015029KAI
LINN	<i>linnrecords.com</i>
Various Cpsrs Vn Concs. <i>Swensen/SCO.</i>	Ⓜ ④ ⓐ CKR614
MELODIYA	<i>melody.su</i>
Tchaikovsky Queen of Spades (pp1989). <i>Sols incl Hworostovsky/Moscow RSO/Fedoseyev.</i>	Ⓜ ③ MELCD100 2549
Various Cpsrs Contemporary Chor Wks, Vol 1 (bp2012-17). <i>Chbr Ch of the Moscow Conservatory/Soloviev.</i>	ⓕ MELCD100 2557
MULTI.MODAL	<i>nmcrec.co.uk/multimodal</i>
Carlyle/Wright Decoys. <i>Molitor/Blunt/Rennie.</i>	ⓕ ● MM01
MUSICUBE	
Letort Semelles de vent: African Rimbaud's Trips. <i>Wassie/Tazartès/Cube Qt.</i>	ⓕ CUB1414
MUSIQUE EN WALLONIE	<i>musiwall.ulg.ac.be</i>
Torri Vanità del mondo (pp1988). <i>Sols incl Schlick & Ragin/Musica Antique Köln/Goebel.</i>	Ⓑ ② MEW1890
MUSO	<i>muso.mu</i>
Brassens Ballades. <i>Lunaisiens/Marzorati.</i>	ⓕ MU026
Vivaldi Four Seasons. <i>Orlando/Solisti Aquilani.</i>	ⓕ MU028
Various Cpsrs Abendmusiken. <i>Ens Stravaganza.</i>	ⓕ MU025
MYRIOS	<i>myriosmusic.com</i>
Shostakovich. Tsintsadze Vc Concs No 2. <i>Hornung/Deutsches SO Berlin/Poga.</i>	ⓕ MYR023
NAXOS	<i>naxos.com</i>
Azarashvili Wks for Vc & Pf. <i>Suleiman/Issakadze.</i>	Ⓜ 8 579030
Haydn Kybd Wks. <i>Jandó.</i>	Ⓜ 8 573934
Koželuch Syms, Vol 2. <i>Czech Chbr PO/Štílec.</i>	Ⓜ 8 573872
Marx Orch Wks, Vol 1. <i>Bochum SO/Sloane.</i>	Ⓜ 8 573831
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Moyzes Syms Nos 7 & 8. <i>Slovak RSO/Slovák.</i>	Ⓜ 8 573653
Onslow Stg Qnts, Vol 3. <i>Elan Qnt.</i>	Ⓜ 8 573887
Quayle Stg Qts Nos 1-3. <i>Avalon Qt.</i>	Ⓜ 8 559851
Scarlatti, D Cpte Kybd Sons, Vol 21. <i>Lee, SK.</i>	Ⓜ 8 573795
Twardowski Wks for Vn & Orch. <i>Augustyn/Toruń SO/Smolij.</i>	Ⓜ 8 579031
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Various Cpsrs Pf Laureate Recital. <i>Wang, C.</i>	Ⓜ 8 573945
Various Cpsrs Toccata – Hp Wks. <i>Netzer.</i>	Ⓜ 8 573835
NORTHERN FLOWERS	<i>nflowers.ru</i>
Tishchenko Cpte Pf Wks, Vol 5. <i>Polyakov/Mazitova.</i>	ⓕ NFPMA99127
ODRADEK	<i>odradek-records.com</i>
Scriabin Cpte Late Pf Wks. <i>Kreiling.</i>	Ⓜ ② ODRCD366
ORFEO	<i>orfeo-international.de</i>
Haydn Ritorno di Tobia (pp2013). <i>Sols/Arnold Schoenberg Ch/Orch La Scintilla/Harnoncourt.</i>	Ⓜ ② C952 1821
Reiter. Schubert. Schumann Lieder. <i>Kulman/Kutrowatz.</i>	ⓕ C956 181A
Various Cpsrs Orch Wks (r1980-91). <i>Bavarian St Orch/Bavarian RSO/Sawallisch.</i>	Ⓢ ③ ⓐ C957 188L
PALADINO	<i>paladino.at</i>
Bruch. Weber Wks for Cl, Va & Orch. <i>Ashkenazy, D/Kholodenko/Royal Baltic Fest Orch/Liljefors.</i>	ⓕ PMR0089
Debussy Préludes (pp1971/r2018). <i>Ashkenazy, V.</i>	ⓕ PMR0100
PENTATONE	<i>pentatonemusic.com</i>
Debussy Orch Wks. <i>Luxembourg PO/Gimeno.</i>	ⓕ Ⓢ PTC5186 627
Dutilleux Tout un monde lointain <i>Lutosławski</i> Vc Conc. <i>Moser/Berlin RSO/Søndergård.</i>	ⓕ Ⓢ PTC5186 689
Rossini Ovs. <i>Orch of the Comunale Th, Bologna/Mariotti.</i>	ⓕ Ⓢ PTC5186 719
Strauss II, J Fledermaus. <i>Sols/NDR Rad Philh/Foster.</i>	ⓕ ② Ⓢ PTC5186 635
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PIANO CLASSICS	<i>piano-classics.com</i>
Chaminade Pf Wks. <i>Viner.</i>	ⓕ PCL10164
Liszt Études d'exécution transcendante. <i>Gugnin.</i>	ⓕ PCL10158
PRIMA CLASSIC	
Various Cpsrs Spirito – Op Arias. <i>Rebeka/Orch of Massimo Th, Palermo/Bignamini.</i>	ⓕ PRIMA001
PRIMA FACIE	<i>primafacie.ascrecords.com</i>
Godfrey Fall of Gondolin. <i>Various artists.</i>	Ⓜ ② PFCD092/3
Messiaen Nativité du Seigneur. <i>Tanner.</i>	ⓕ PFCD081
PROFIL	<i>haensslerprofil.de</i>
Brahms. Bruckner Syms. <i>BPO/Munich PO/VPO/Knappertsbusch.</i>	Ⓢ ⑩ ⓐ PH18048
Various Cpsrs Edn (r1937-63). <i>Kondrashin.</i>	Ⓢ ⑬ ⓐ PH18046
Strauss, R Daphne (pp1950). <i>Sols incl Frick, Rott & Legner/Dresden St Op/Kempe.</i>	ⓕ ② ⓐ PH07038
Strauss, R Orch Wks. <i>Langbein/Dresden Staatskapelle/Thielemann.</i>	ⓕ ② PH15016
Tchaikovsky Seasons. <i>Dumka. Hoteev.</i>	ⓕ PH18088
RADIO FRANCE	
Charrier/Bel Rising. <i>Charrier/Bel.</i>	ⓕ SIG11112
De Grigny Livre d'orgue (r1992). <i>Isoir.</i>	ⓕ ② TEM316061/2
RAMÉE	<i>outhere-music.com/ramee</i>
Various Cpsrs Splendor de ciel. <i>La Morra.</i>	ⓕ RAM1803
RAUMKLANG	<i>raumklang.de</i>
Bach, JS Solo – Arrs for Lyre, Hurdy-Gurdy & Vielle à roue. <i>Miller, T.</i>	ⓕ RK3405
Hildegard of Bingen Ordo virtutum. <i>Ars Choralis Coeln/Jonas.</i>	ⓕ RK3701
REGENT	<i>regent-records.co.uk</i>
Various Cpsrs Christmas at St George's. <i>Ch of Southwark Cath/Stocken/Harper.</i>	ⓕ REGCD533
RESONUS	<i>resonusclassics.com</i>
Armstrong, T Dance Maze – Chbr Wks. <i>Desbruslais/Fichert/Meecham/Riley/Woodrow/Fidelio Trio.</i>	ⓕ RES10230
Handel Messiah (arr Aareskjold). <i>Sols/BBC Sgrs/Norwegian Wind Ens/Hill.</i>	Ⓜ ② RES10219
Tallis Chor Wks. <i>Chapel Royal/Jackson, C.</i>	ⓕ RES10229
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Scarlatti, A Chbr Cantatas. <i>Cachet/Achten/Scherzi Musicali.</i>	ⓕ RIC396
Telemann Per la tromba & il corno da caccia. <i>Eolus/Madeuf.</i>	ⓕ RIC397
RONDEAU PRODUCTION	<i>rondeau.de</i>
Bigaglia. Lotti Chor Wks. <i>Hanover Boys' Ch/Festa Musicale/Breiding.</i>	ⓕ ROP7023
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Various Cpsrs Sing a cappella!. <i>Boys of St Ursus Cath, Solothurn/Reize.</i>	ⓕ ROP6171
SKANI	<i>skani.lv</i>
Kalniņš Moments musicaux. <i>Ostrovskis.</i>	ⓕ LMIC069
SOMM	<i>somm-recordings.com</i>
Gershwin Centennial Edition – Orch Wks (r1998). <i>Godowsky III/RSNO/Serebrier.</i>	ⓕ ⓐ ARIADNE5003
SONO LUMINUS	<i>sonoluminus.com</i>
Thorvaldsdóttir Aequa. <i>Intl Contemporay Ens.</i>	ⓕ (CD +  DSL92227
Various Cpsrs He(a)r. <i>Nordic Affect.</i>	ⓕ (CD +  DSL92224
STEINWAY & SONS	<i>steinway.co.uk</i>
Various Cpsrs Images et Mirages: Hommage à Debussy. <i>Russo.</i>	ⓕ STNS30105
STERLING	<i>sterlingcd.com</i>
Bach, JS Wohltemperirte Clavier, Book 2. <i>Lucas Ogdon.</i>	Ⓜ ② CDA1830
STONE RECORDS	<i>stonerecords.co.uk</i>
Cage Gtr Wks. <i>Large-Caplan.</i>	ⓕ 5060192 780833
Various Cpsrs My Lord Has Come. <i>Ardingly Coll Schola Cantorum/Stafford.</i>	ⓕ 5060192 780857
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Dvořák Pf Qts Nos 1 & 2. <i>Dvořák Pf Qt.</i>	ⓕ SU4257-2
TACTUS	<i>tactus.it</i>
Bossi Chbr Wks. <i>Various artists.</i>	ⓕ TC862707
Briccialdi Wks for Fl & Pf. <i>Fabbriani/Damerini.</i>	ⓕ TC810203
Ghezzi Sacred Voc Wks. <i>Cappella Musicale de San Giacomo Maggiore, Bologna/Cascio.</i>	ⓕ ② TC650790
Krug. Liszt Abati nella musica – Sacred Pf Wks. <i>Vaglica.</i>	ⓕ TC810002
Various Cpsrs Divertimento italiano – 19th-Century Wks for Harmonium & Pf. <i>Toschi/Mazzoli.</i>	ⓕ TC850004

TOCCATA CLASSICS	<i>toccataclassics.com</i>
Paganini Caprices, Op 1 (orch Skoryk). <i>Lviv International SO/Zemtsov.</i>	ⓕ TOCC0463
Reicha Cpte Pf Wks, Vol 3. <i>Löwenmark.</i>	ⓕ TOCC0243
Stöhr Vn Sons Nos 1 & 2. <i>Mathé/Faigen.</i>	ⓕ TOCC0461
Winterberg Chbr Wks, Vol 1. <i>Arizona Wind Qnt.</i>	ⓕ TOCC0491
TUDOR	<i>tudor.ch</i>
Brahms Syms No 4 Dvořák Sym No 9. <i>Bamberg SO/Hrůša.</i>	ⓕ TUDOR1744
Various Cpsrs Délices du piano. <i>Aronsky.</i>	Ⓜ ③ TUDOR1690
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ARTHAUS MUSIK

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(pp2015). Hannigan/Relyea/Paris Op Orch/Salonen.
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Blake Snowman. Blake. (F)  109 381; (F)  109 382

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Dvořák Syms. Chor Wks. Sols/Chors/Prague SO/Altrichter/
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Matthew Bourne

The choreographer and founder of New Adventures dance-theatre company on his love of music and his desire to immerse himself in every score he uses

If you're going to take a much-loved score like *Swan Lake* and do something different with it, as I have, you've got to love it. And I think it's glorious music. What's so wonderful about it for me, as a creator, is that it's written to tell a story (albeit a different one to mine!). It's dramatically driven, which is a gift to someone like me who loves telling stories. My 2018 version of *Swan Lake* has had a few revisions – it's more grown-up, more gorgeous – but audiences will still recognise it from the 1995 production. Yes, there are cuts to the score – any company will do that – but it's in a recognisable order.

I was about 18 when I saw my first ballet – and that just happened to be *Swan Lake*. I grew up in East London with parents who loved popular music and music from the movies; my dad would be downstairs singing Frank Sinatra, and I'd be upstairs singing Julie Andrews or Barbra Streisand. I had a big collection of LPs, but the only classical one was Holst's *The Planets*. So when I left school (which I'd hated) I decided to educate myself, culturally, in areas I didn't know anything about. I'd never seen an opera, so I decided I should go to one to see if I liked it. The same happened with ballet – and that's how I ended up seeing *Swan Lake*. Having grown up with MGM musicals, I now discovered that you could see a piece with dancing all the way through it. That was how I fell in love with ballet and contemporary dance.

It was interesting when, more than 20 years ago now, we approached Tchaikovsky's score afresh. I'd often felt that, in the classical version of the ballet, Act 4 struggled to express the emotional turmoil of the music so it was nice to be able to address that. We were also able to think about what the tempi should be. The classical version had become progressively slower as dancers challenged themselves with higher jumps, more turns, greater extensions ... So we decided to look at the movement of actual swans and use that to inspire the tempi. It was lovely to be more faithful to the original score.

One score that really rewards you through repeated listening is Prokofiev's *Cinderella*, which I choreographed back in 1997. The Prokofiev estate loved what we did with it, and they've now trusted us to create a reduced score of *Romeo and Juliet* for our new production that opens next year. The music will be arranged for 15 musicians by our regular New Adventures collaborator Terry Davies; the aim is to produce something that's true to Prokofiev but that's exciting and refreshing – a different sound for what will be a contemporary reimagining of Shakespeare's classic love story.

Live music is a dilemma for us. We're not a ballet company that gets funded to the level where we can tour with a full orchestra. But live music is something we strive for, and in



THE RECORD I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT

Rodgers & Hammerstein *Climb Ev'ry Mountain* (from *The Sound of Music* OST) Sony

Something about this hits me every time – the introduction, the chords ... I adore it, and I've already told my partner that I want it played at my funeral.

Swan Lake, for the London run at Sadler's Wells, we're bringing in top musicians to perform a reduced score. We also have, in London, the Royal Ballet's Matthew Ball dancing with us. It's a dream role for him – it was after he saw the show at the age of eight that he decided he wanted to be a dancer.

With any new project, I do a lot of research. For *The Red Shoes* (2016), I'd wanted to do my own version for a long time, but there wasn't enough music in the film. I also found the original score by Brian Easdale very much 'of its time'. So I listened to the music by Bernard Herrmann, focusing on the non-Hitchcock film scores he wrote around the time of *The Red Shoes* such as *The Ghost and Mrs Muir* and *Fahrenheit 451*, and then Terry brought it all together.

When I'm working on a piece, I'll listen to the music on my iPod or play it through my Sonus system. I have Spotify, which is useful when you're in the studio and need to listen to something instantly. I still like to 'own' music though – it's only when I buy music on CD that I feel like it's mine. **G** *Swan Lake* tours until May 25, 2019 (visit new-adventures.net), and includes an eight-week Christmas residency at Sadler's Wells from December 4 to January 27 (visit sadlerswells.com)

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